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REMARKS

ON THE

THREE FIRST CHAPTERS

OF

The Revelation of St. John:

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED

FOUR LETTERS

TO

The Rev. THOMAS CHARLES, A. B.

ON THE

NUMBER OF THE BEAST, AND THE WOMAN'S
FIRST AND SECOND FLIGHT FROM HIM INTO
THE WILDERNESS, &c. &c.

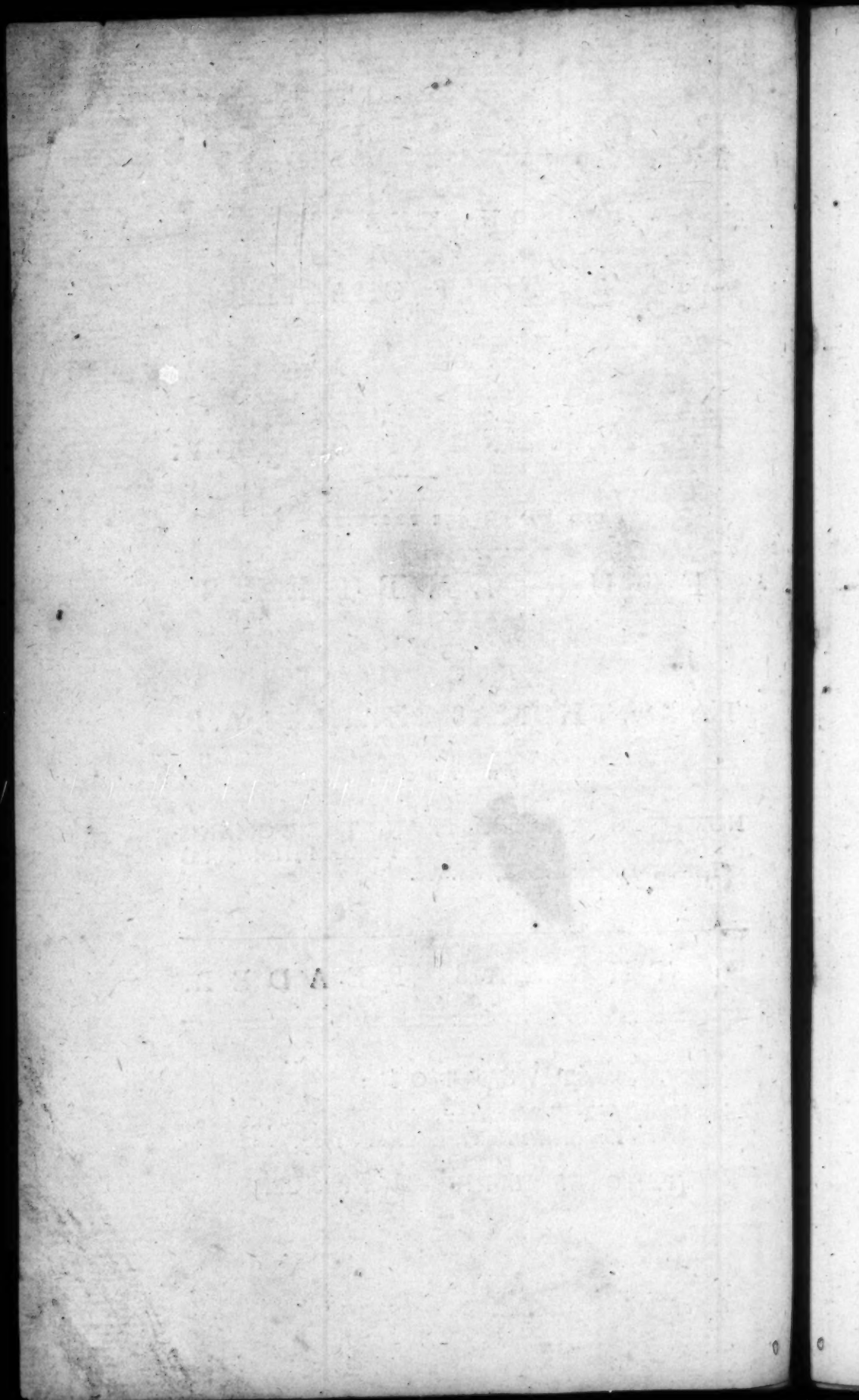
By THOMAS READER.

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P



INTRODUCTION.

THE enemies of Israel; and of God, no doubt often triumphed aloud, while the long-expected advent of the Messiah was delayed, beyond the successive periods, to which mistaken hope was ready fondly to fix it. So triumphs *Mr. O'Leary** in the successive disappointments which the friends of the reformation have met with, respecting the time when popery will be destroyed; and this salutary thought seems to be awfully hidden from his heart, that, if ten thousand more of them should be disappointed

* See in his tracts, the Essay on Toleration, p. 356 to 374.

in the same way, this will make no difference, as to the certain accomplishment of what God has immutably resolved against the *man of sin*; of which his *witnesses* will never cease to give warning, as long as they live; whether he esteems them *well** or *ill-bred men*. The Christian world can, however, have nothing to do with the man, who prostitutes his reason so far, as to make, in any sense, or upon any ground whatever, an apology for the *Inquisition*†.

But while it is impossible, that the Papists, as such, should ever love the *Revelation* of St. John, which was written with a design to point out their abominations, to the abhorrence of the Christian world; it is for this reason, the more important that faithful Protestants, and especially their *Ministers*, should carefully study this part of God's truth. If we love Christ, we

* P. 358. † P. 356 to 366.

cannot

cannot but rejoice to hear from him from heaven, whither he is gone to *prepare a place for us* ; especially as his wisdom and love saw proper, while he had yet one Apostle left alive upon earth, to lay before us, that scheme of his future government of the church and the world, which himself and his other apostles had only hinted at, during the time of their personal ministry. And if these his last inspired words dwell in us richly (while we here take such a view of his person and grace, as will tend to excite a longing after the full enjoyment of him in heaven), we shall the better know what to expect from him, in the future dispensations of his providence ; be preserved from neglecting, as well as from misunderstanding, or misapplying the words of his former prophets ; and escape many of those snares, into which they are sure to run, who will not *anoint* their *eyes* with prophetic *eye-salve*, nor take this part of
divine

divine truth as *a lamp to their feet, and a light to their paths.*

On these accounts, I thank God, every day, for the little I have known of this book ; and for the gracious use which he has made of my poor labours upon it (which were printed in the year 1778), for the instruction and edification of some of his servants. Farther to confirm and improve what I then offered ; as well as to shew, how the whole *Revelation* is elucidated, by considering the seven epistles of this book, as a prophetic description of the successive periods of the church, is the design of the following pages ; in which, having had no other object than to speak the whole truth plainly, as far as I could attain to it, I devoutly commit them to the divine patronage and blessing.

T. R.

Taunton, Jan. 26, 1785.

FOUR LETTERS

T O

The Rev. *Thomas Charles.*

FOUR LETTERS

The Rev. J. Jones

LETTER I.

T O

The Rev. THOMAS CHARLES,

Bala, Merionethshire.

REVEREND SIR,

LONG before we were born, the blessed God had accomplished the most interesting of all prophecies; and thus made that point plain, which *the spirit of Christ*, in the old testament *prophets*, stimulated them to inquire into, viz. *What, and what manner of time he signified, when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ*; but *the glories* which are to follow *after these sufferings*, both to the justice and grace of God, and to Jews and Gentiles, in time and eternity, being in a great measure future, are still to be *searched out*, and will be so, by those heads of our gospel Israel, who have the spirit of Christ in them; 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. *Gr.* No doubt, there-
B fore,

fore, the apostle John, searched into the *Revelation*, which he received in *Patmos*; though probably, like the ancient prophets, he considered himself as *ministering*, rather to others than to himself, many of the things in this prophecy, which are now plain to us, and will be more so to our successors; for had he known them, probably ecclesiastical history would have transmitted his key of the *Revelation* to us.

Besides, with respect to one point, of which our apostle might have eminently desired to have been informed, our Lord had said to him and the other apostles, a little before his ascension, Acts i. 6, 7. *It is not for you to know the times, or the seasons, for restoring the kingdom to Israel*; and the following words, viz. *which the Father has put in his own power*, make it probable, either that Christ's human soul did not then know the time of that desirable event (any more than the *day and hour of judgment*); or that, if it was made known to him after his resurrection, it was with an order not to publish it at present. While, however, Christ's answer to their inquiry encouraged them to hope, that *the kingdom* would certainly be *restored to Israel* (in God's sense of that word, whether it was so in their's or not), they could not doubt, but that wisdom and love dictated the present concealment of the time, when they recollected what he had said to them, a
little

little before his crucifixion, in John xv. 15. viz. *I have called you friends; for, all things that I have hitherto heard of my Father I have made known to you;* for which reason I understand those words, John xvi. 12. *I have many things to say to you; but ye cannot bear them now,* of the things which he had hinted, about the spiritual nature of his kingdom, and the rejection of the Jews, and the admission of the Gentiles into it, rather than of those things which were afterwards opened, both to himself and his people, in this *revelation*.

The age in which our Lord was born, had so doated on the low idea of Christ's setting up a temporal kingdom, that God would not intrust them with this secret, when the *kingdom* should be *restored to Israel*. Accordingly this revelation, which speaks of the time of that event, was not given till most or all the apostles were dead, except John; who, it seems to appear from the above words, did not understand that part of this *revelation* which treats on this subject. Yet it is plain, that those words, in Acts i. 6, 7. cannot be extended to all Christians to the end of the world; for, when the Jews are restored to their own land, the *times and seasons* of its begun and compleat accomplishment, must be known to them, and to all nations. And, even with respect to us, as the apostle has

described this event as occurring at the beginning of the seventh trumpet, chap. xiv. 1—5. if we find reason to believe that that trumpet will sound, A. D. 1866, we cannot but expect it about that time. Observe, the *light sown for the righteous* (in the God-man, and in the covenant of grace) is concealed for a time; and afterwards springs up gradually, to the compleat harvest in heaven.

But whether our author understood this revelation or not, his plenteous tears at the idea, that *no one in heaven or earth was found worthy to open the book, or to loose its seals*; as well as the transport, joy, and praise, which heaven and earth expressed, when they saw *the Lamb* take the sealed book into his hands, Rev. v. 4—14. promised aloud, that they would study this prophecy, though it described things then unaccomplished, as soon as they should receive it: and so will I, if God permit; even though some of my brethren should still so far *forget* the respect due to their *own reason*, as to condemn my labours on this book *unheard*. If gospel ministers do not understand prophecies, they are ignorant of a very considerable part of the sacred writings; and neglect those views of the divine perfections and government, which are eminently adapted to enlarge, purify, and invigorate the mind; and which he had prepared and designed, to be the mean of their humility, the food of faith
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and hope, and the fewel of divine love. Therefore, if any faithful minister of Christ, who now passeth over the prophecies as too deep for him, shall hereafter be led to a *humble* attention to them; he will bless God for directing his thoughts to that command given to ministers, *Come and see*; ch. vi. 1, 3, 5, 7.

But to proceed to what is more immediately intended. By the *glassy sea, like crystal before the throne*, Rev. iv. 6. by which the conquerors of *the beast* stood exulting, chap. xv. 2. I should, with some others, have understood *Christ* himself, if he had not been personally present, in this grand scene, as a *Lamb that had been slain*, chap. v. 6. which seems to imply the water of purification, as well as the blood of atonement; therefore it may rather represent gospel *ordinances*, or the *church* of God, for whose use they are instituted. Either of these might be typified by the *laver of brass* in the tabernacle, and the *molten sea* in Solomon's temple; Exod. xxx. 18. 2 Chron. iv. 2—6. Both of these may be said to be *before the throne*; where nothing can dwell, but what is holy, and of heavenly original: both of these are clear *as crystal*; to which nothing but heavenly things are compared in scripture; Ezek. i. 22. Rev. xxi. 11. xxii. 1. And the triumphant company, who had gained the victory over *the beast*, over *his mark, image*, and *the number of his name*, might stand exulting,

6 *The Church and Ordinances a Sea.*

ing, either *by the ordinances*, or the *church*, both of which they saw secured. As therefore these ideas agree either to the *church* or the *ordinances*, I understand this *sea of glass* of both; for they are correlates. I cannot, however, exclude the *FORMER*; (1.) Because the *sea* and *waters* are common emblems of people, both in sacred and common language; see chap. viii. 8, 9. xvii. 1. (2.) It is most honourable to the church of God, as well as most consonant to the idea of their being the *brethren* and *sisters* of Christ, to suppose them all, representatively present, under the type of a *sea of glass*, in this grand convention of heaven and earth, when their Lord was about to open the sealed book. (3.) The church of God shall be like the waters of the sea for *multitude*; and, if left to themselves, would be also, like that, *unstable* and *turbulent*; but their *purity* and *beauty*, like a *glassy sea*, forms a striking contrast to the wicked, whom the Holy Ghost compares to a *troubled sea*, *when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt*; for whom God declares that *there is no peace*, in time or eternity; Isaiah lvii. 20, 21. (4.) The *fire* of persecution, which will be *mingled with* this *sea of glass*, A. D. 1936, just before the vials are poured out, chap. xv. 2. will be kindled against *men*, for the sake of God's *ordinances*; and can no other ways obstruct the *latter*, than by maligning the *former*.

But

The Fires of Persecution rage, A. D. 1936. 7

But if you apprehend, that the church's being compared, in part, to a *sea of glass*, A. D. 96, chap. iv. 6. and not mentioned again as such till A. D. 1936, chap. xv. 2. intimates, that there will be a considerable similitude between the churches in these two periods, I have nothing to object to the idea: but, let the church in A. D. 1936 observe, from the expression *mingled with fire*, added in the latter passage, that they have such a *fire* to expect in the time of the *second beast*, as heathen Rome had not kindled A. D. 96; yet that while it rages, God's people will stand triumphant by the *ordinances* of the church, *having the harps of God*, high tuned and strong, to tell unborn ages, that *He* was with them, of whom it had been said before, in a like case, *the form of the fourth is like the Son of God*, Dan. iii. 25. and that God's *sea* will speedily, and for ever, quench the Devil's *fire*, and clap its hands over its last expiring spark.

You ask, *Where* do the *two witnesses* deliver their testimony? *Ans.* As we have no account *where* they prophesied, for the first 150 (of their 1260) years, viz. from A. D. 606, to 756, it is natural to consider them, as having delivered their testimony, for that time, in the presence of the *papal* and *Mahometan chiefs*, against both of whom God had subpœnaed them both to witness; though the *protestant* churches, with their magistrates and ministers,
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were to testify chiefly against *popery*; as the *Greek* church, with their magistrates and ministers, against *Mahometanism*. These were God's *witnesses* in the East and West; against both of whom the Pope was greatly enraged, especially against the western witness, on account of what he had said against him, to his face, as a *universal bishop*; so that when he became a *beast*, A. D. 756, this deponent was glad to fly for shelter where he could; and indeed to have continued near him, would have been equally useless and unsafe; for what end could it have answered to talk logick to a *beast*, to reason with a *dragon*, or to preach divinity to the *Devil*? Besides, God had not sent him to convert the *Pope*, but to gather up his elect out of his territories, especially among those seven of the *ten horns*, or kingdoms of the *beast*, which lay in the *wilderness*, at a distance from his court.

And though the *Mahometan Chief* was not equally intolerant to the eastern witness; and though the *Grand Seignior* now suffers the christian worship in his metropolis, and confirms the election of the Patriarch of Constantinople, who is the head of the *Greek* church; yet every minister and member of that despised, and indeed, too contemptible church, finds himself situated amidst the briars and thorns of a very inhospitable *wilderness*; which word (says *Lancaster's* Abridgment of *Daubuz* on the

the Revelation*) expresses "that which is
" opposite to settlement and worldly peace ;
" see II. xiv. 7. xxvii. 10. xxxii. 9. Jer. xxii. 6.
" Hof. ii. 3. but when persons threatened,
" and pursued by enemies, fly into a wilder-
" ness, the word *wilderness* then becomes the
" symbol of an obscure and retired, yet of a
" safe state and condition ; see I Macc. ii.
" 28, 31." Such then is the present state of
the eastern and western churches, with relation
to Mahometanism and popery. And if the
beast has always endeavoured to destroy God's
witnesses, and the most active of them have
been forced to fly for their lives, whenever
the times would admit of it, in all the dif-
ferent kingdoms of his dominion ; if he has
deprived God's *labourers* of their hire and their
peace, when he could not touch their lives ;
and if he has kept their followers and ad-
herents in a low and afflicted state ; and loaded
their names with contempt, when he could
not remove them from those places in the
wilderness, in which they were born ; cer-
tainly every member of the western, as well as
of the eastern church, may even now be said
to be in a wilderness. Yea, like the Israelitish
children who were born in the wilderness,
they, who are comparatively at rest in the wil-
derness, may even be said to be driven thither,
in the persons of their parents or predecessors.
But wherever God's witnesses are, while he

inspires them with zeal, they will never cease to testify against the *beast* and the *false prophet*.

But we must here distinguish, 1. Of the *witnesses* and the *woman*; 2. Of their *friends* and *enemies*; and, 3. Of the *places* where they reside and witness.

1. Of the *witnesses* and the *woman*. Both these words describe the *church* of God; which, however, can be but one, though it may fall under different descriptions in the same or different times. The *witnesses* prophesy, in the East and West, 1260 years, viz. from A. D. 606 to 1866, *clothed*, for the whole of that time, in *sackcloth*; ch. xi. 3. But after A. D. 756, the church is represented under another scriptural emblem, viz. of a *woman*; see Ps. xlv. 9. Is. liv. 5, 6. Matt. xxv. 1, &c. Eph. v. 32. Rev. xxi. 9. which speaks her dignity and blessedness, as related to the Lord Jesus; her bringing forth children to her divine husband, ch. xii. 2, 5. and yet her weak and defenceless state in herself; and her need of such instruments, for her political support and protection, as God shall see proper to employ for that purpose.

This is a very different person from that *woman*, the carnal Jerusalem, which *Zechariah* saw, ch. v. 5—11. cast into an *ephah*, when the
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the *measure* of her sins, and God's judgments were filled up, with a *talent of lead* upon her, to keep her down in it; and afterwards carried by *two other women*, with *stork-like wings*, that is, by the Grecian and Roman empires, to build an house for this ephah, *in the land of Shinar*, amongst the papists in spiritual Babylon; that it *may be established, and set there upon her own trading base*. This was the *bond woman*, Hagar, Gal. iv. 24, 25. who, in some respects, adumbrated that *woman*, spoken of Rev. xvii. or the apostate church of Rome; only with this difference, that the former traded *without*, but the latter *against* God.

But the person here spoken of is the *bride, the Lamb's wife*; who, under the seventh trumpet, at A. D. 1866, and not before, will be *clothed with the sun*, &c. ch. xii. 1. After this time, she also brings forth, and nourishes, many more children than the church ever did, in the time of the *witnesses*, ver. 2, 5. But on this account she is forced to *flee* a second time into the *wilderness*, ver. 6. This is certainly her second flight; and in my next letter I hope to prove, that ver. 14 refers us back, in the plu-perfect tense, to the time when she first flew on the *eagle's wings* from the serpent into a wilderness; where she is *nourished* of God (not 1260 years after A. D. 1866, but) during the whole time of the beast, viz. from

12 *The Woman's Friends and Enemies.*

A. D. 756 to 2016. But this leads us to consider

2. Her *friends* and her *enemies*. Her *enemies* are, in the East, that *dragon*, the *false prophet*; first as a Mahometan, with his devotees the *Saracens*, *Turks*, &c. and afterwards, from A. D. 1866 to 2016, as a papal Christian, under the name of the *second beast*. And in the West, they are the *dragon*, the *beast*, and the *ten horns*, or kingdoms into which the western Roman empire was crumbled, A. D. 456, after these *horns* had received their power *the same hour* with the *beast*, viz. A. D. 756; see ch. xvii. 12, 13. From all these enemies God protects her, as he did *Moses* and *Elijah*, and the Jewish church in the wilderness; and employs for her safety those *two great* eastern and western *wings*, into which the Roman empire was divided, A. D. 395; and which, having become christian, before it was so divided, of course desired to protect the church of God. And though Mahometanism has wounded Christianity in the East, and popery debauched it in the West, there is still so much of it left, both in Mahometanism and popery, as has frequently conspired with natural conscience, and human policy, to mitigate the trials of the church. Thus in the West especially, where there is most religion, when any *horn*, or kingdom of *the beast*, has pushed at its own protestant subjects, some individuals
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of the same nation, supported by the liberal spirit of a humane multitude, or some other kingdom, as part of the western wing of the eagle, has rescued the woman, the church, from the power of the beast, when he was ready to devour her.

But if it seems to you a contradiction, that the *woman* should be persecuted by any nation, as a *born* of the beast, and yet protected in the same, as part of the *wing of the eagle*; recollect, that if the woman is protected, she must be so where she is; therefore if we should hereafter find her in a wilderness, that lies in the territories of the beast, she must be sheltered in some part of that wilderness; though perhaps not on the spot where she was persecuted. And, accordingly, while many have fallen under the paw of the beast, some brave spirits, of truly Roman courage and liberality of sentiment, though they could not resist the enemy upon the ground, have snatched her away from him; flying with the *woman* on their wings, from one place to another in the wilderness; as churches and ministers have experienced in every age. While, however, the woman is upon these wings, it is God himself that *feeds* her, ver. 14. as he did Israel in a *wilderness*; in which she also is *nourished* 1260 years, that is, *for a time, and times, and half a time*, viz. from A. D. 756 to 2016; *απο προσωπου,*

14 *Of the Woman's Places in the Wilderness.*

προσωπου, *at a distance from the face of the serpent**. But this leads me,

3. To distinguish of the *places* where the *witnesses* prophesy, and the *woman* is nourished. We have heard that the *witnesses prophesy in sackcloth*, from A. D. 606 to 1866, ch. xi. 3. and that the *woman is nourished in that wilderness*, into which she flew on the *eagle's wings*, from A. D. 756 to 2016, *at a distance from the face of the serpent*, ch. xii. 14. But wherever God's servants are *nourished*, they will do his work; the witnesses therefore prophesy in a wilderness, from A. D. 756 to 1866; yet, as they prophesy *at a distance from the serpent*, we are not to look for them in (that which is blasphemously called) *St. Peter's Patrimony*, which is the most irreligious spot in Christendom; but chiefly among those seven (of the *ten*) *horns*, which lie at a distance from the seat of the beast; for though the wilderness, into which the Israelites fled, when they left Egypt, did not lie in the dominion of the Egyptians (which might be one reason why they did not attempt to bring them back, in all those years of their perigrination), the wilderness into which the *woman flew* certainly lies in the territories of the beast; or else, (1.) She would have had no use for the wings

* See the same sense of *απο*, Matt. iii. 7, 13. viii. 1, 11. Mark vii. 4.

of the eagle, when she was come thither; which is contrary to ch. xiii. 7, 8. (2.) The beast's raising the country upon her; and casting *waters out of his mouth, like a flood, to cause her to be carried away of the flood*, ch. xii. 15. supposes, that the wilderness, into which she fled, lay in, what he called, his territories. Besides, (3.) Her testifying against him, where he was not known, nor had claimed their homage, would have been doing nothing. Yet in this dangerous wilderness she is *nourished* of God; and repeatedly escapes from his emissaries, on the *eagle's wings*; ver. 14.

About the time of the slaying of the witnesses, or at least by A. D. 1866, the dragon, in a very critical hour, breaks in upon the *woman*, that is, into the purest protestant, or other churches (where only the *man-child* can be brought forth), to devour her offspring, viz. the elect of God, ver. 3, 4. yet, as she can take no nourishment while in labour (especially in the presence of the dragon, who will so soon be cast out), this is not inconsistent with her being said to be nourished, at a *distance from the face of the serpent*, from A. D. 756 to 2016, ver. 14. This will however occasion her *fleeing on foot, sun-dressed* as she is, into another *wilderness*; where *she has a place prepared of God*; and where *they*, that is numerous instruments, shall *feed* her, from A. D. 1866 to 3125, ver. 6. But nothing is said of this last wilderness,

16 *The Woman flees into a second Wilderness.*

wilderness, whether it lies in the jurisdiction of the beast or not. He can however have nothing to do with *it*, or *her*, when he has made his exit, A. D. 2016.

I only add at present ; as we are, like Israel, in a wilderness, let us look to God to guide, protect, feed, and heal us. And may the captain of our salvation, in whose hands the *beast* is not so much as the meanest reptile under the paw of a lion, shed his most benign influence on your head and heart. So prays,

DEAR SIR,

Your affectionate Brother and Servant
in the Gospel,

Taunton,
January 1, 1785.

T. R.

LETTER

LETTER II.

T O

The Rev. THOMAS CHARLES,

Bala, Merionethshire.

REVEREND SIR,

WHILE we cannot but deplore that inattention to prophecy, and especially to the *Revelation* by St. John, which lowers tremendously on the future years of many professors of religion, and their unborn posterity, my brother may be certain, that my existence is the more endeared to me, if my pen has been permitted, in any measure, to increase his acquaintance with this *heaven-descended* book.

It is manifest, that the Mahometan chief has not yet become a papal Christian. This is the person whom I understand by the *second beast*; who has not yet arisen, (1.) Because the
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18 *His Tail draws the third Part of the Stars.*

first beast has not been wounded in any one of his *heads*, or *hills*, and therefore not healed, ch. xiii. 3. xvii. 9. but the *second* beast causes the world to worship the *first*, after he had been wounded with the sword, and did live; ch. xiii. 12, 14. (2.) No crowned head whatever has yet, for a continuance, stood before the beast, that is, in his *fight*; as ΕΥΩΤΙΟΥ signifies 92 times in the New Testament; ver. 12, 14. Much less, (3.) has any king pretended to *work miracles* before him, even to make *fire* come down from heaven, in the *fight* of men; nor caused an *image* of the beast to be generally made, and worshipped: nor caused such image to *speak*; ver. 12—15. (4.) The first beast has not yet avowed 666 as his *number*; much less has any *two-horned* beast compelled his worshippers to receive his *number*, or his *image*; though many kings have been zealous for his *mark*, and his *name*; ver. 16, 17.

Whenever the *second* beast arises, you well observe, “that his acts and operations will
“make him as clearly and distinctly known,
“as the *first* beast now is; especially his resolute exertion to affix the *name*, the *mark*,
“or the *number* of the first beast on the fore-
“heads of his worshippers;” which he will effect, by the *lying wonders* of a *false prophet*, and by the brutal force of his *two horns*, or kingdoms. These *two horns*, with the preceding *ten*, will make *twelve*, with which to
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push at those who hearken to the TWELVE apostles of the Lamb. And perhaps this may add to the probability, that the Grand Seignior's dominions will be reduced to two *little horns*, or *kingdoms*, before he becomes a papal Christian.

If these beasts had not been in the church, they could not have done such mischief there; but we find, ch. xii. 3, 4. that that *dragon* the Pope will still be *in heaven*, that is, in the church, after the seventh trumpet has sounded, A. D. 1866. And as he will there attack the *sun-dressed* woman, and his influence be very great, by means of the second beast; therefore it is said, ver. 4. *His tail* (not *threw*, but) *drew* down, *What?* Certainly none of the *seven stars*, which Christ holds *in his right hand*; but some earth-born vapours, which had ascended a little way into the sky, and, through the defect of human sight, seemed to join the ranks of the hosts of heaven. And how does he bring them down? Not by his sophistical reasonings, or persuasive oratory chiefly; but by *his long and strong tail*. And he brings himself down with them, as is intimated in the word, He *drew* them. But why does he come down with them? Not principally to see every spark of their light put out; for the earth, to which they were fallen, would do this for him; nor merely because he had no

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20 *His Tail draws the third Part of the Stars.*

company left him in the heavens, which suited him (for as he could never reach the fixed stars, so if he had, he could have had no communion with them, nor they with him). But the exploit of bringing down so many stars, with his tail, was so great, that he undesignedly brought himself to the ground in effecting it.

All Christians however, when this time is come, see that the Pope is no more any part of the church of Christ, than a dragon is a part or the rational creation; for, (1.) No member of the church of Christ would have put out so many lights at once. True, these stars would have fallen in time, if he had not *drawn* them down; yet to use his influence, to make a third part of the ministers in Christendom earthy and sensual, is not the *spot of God's children*. (2.) No member of the Christian church could have conspired with the second beast, in writing his number 666 on the foreheads of his worshippers, in defiance of God, and of the scripture. (3.) No truly Christian power could have so exalted himself; or so persecuted the *sun-dressed* woman, or her masculine *son*; especially, (4.) after the mischiefs he had so lately done, by *slaying the two witnesses*. By these actions he has forfeited the name of a Christian; and thus, by the year 1886, he has put an end to the church's
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acknowledging any secular power in the house of God; though that power will continue to torment them, at least, another fifty years.

The beast, however, impudently denies, that he has ejected himself: he threw himself out of heaven, that is, the church, by drawing down *the third part of the stars*; yet he insists upon keeping his place there. The two parties therefore must fight it out there, in a bloody campaign. Accordingly, ver. 7, 8, 9. *there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels, with weapons worthy of their hands, fought against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, with their usual weapons of deceit and blood. It is done; the warfare is accomplished. The dragon and his angels are cast out. Rejoice ye heavens, &c.*

This will not be done under the sixth trumpet; therefore the woman's *fleeing from the dragon*, ch. xii. 6. cannot be under that, but must fall under the seventh trumpet. We have heard that this *sun-dressed* woman is the successor of those who had served God under the sixth trumpet, and the same person who had been once called the *two witnesses*; and, as you justly observe, "she is found in the same heaven, to which the witnesses ascended, after their resurrection." If she had loved the mire of pollution, and would have rolled herself in the squalid matter, which once composed

22 *The Woman's first Flight into the Wilderness.*

composed the stars he drew down, she might have been at ease for the present; but being clothed in a celestial dress, she is forced to flee again into a wilderness, as the *two witnesses* had done; and here she *has a place prepared of God, that they should nourish her there 1260 days*, ver. 6. If God prepares a place for his people, it will be either heaven, or some type of it; see Exod. xxiii. 20. Matt. xxv. 34. John xiv. 2, 3. So Canaan was prepared for Israel; and the same land will be prepared again for the Jews, when they flee from this dragon. And some other places will be prepared, both here and in America, for the peaceable residence of his gentile servants; which shall adumbrate *the new heavens and the new earth*, which the saints are to enjoy after the resurrection; see Is. lxv. 17. Here, I apprehend, the church will be settled and at rest, for 1110 of her 1260 years, after she has fled from the dragon, the first 150 years, which fall under the *seventh trumpet*.

But very different things are said of that flight mentioned ver. 14. which was her first; on the two *wings* of the Roman eagle; and before she was *sun-dressed*.

1. This was her first flight into the wilderness, viz. from A. D. 756 to 2016; for, (1.) Now she is *nourished* 1260 years, *απο προσώπου*, at a distance from the face of the serpent;

serpent; which implies that she will have the beast, or the *serpent* (which, at A. D. 1866, is called a *dragon*, ver. 6.) to contend with, for the whole of that time; which agrees to no other period but the above: for it would be inconsistent with the account given us of the millenium, ch. xx. 1—4. to suppose the *woman* to fly from pursuing danger, 1260 years after A. D. 1866: not to say that the two wings of the great eagle cannot have been then first given her, for her flight from the beast. (2.) The phrase, here used, to express her 1260 years flight from the face of the serpent, viz. *a time, times, and half a time*, is the same as Daniel uses to describe the time of the beast's power, ch. vii. 25. xii. 7. which therefore confines it to the above period: especially as the same length of time, viz. 1260 years, when it describes the *churches* times, is called *days* both under the sixth and seventh trumpet; see ch. xi. 3. xii. 6. which calls us to make a different estimate of the very different phrase here used. Especially, (3.) as this *time, times, and half a time*, naturally expresses those alternate successions of summer and winter, that is, of prosperity and adversity, both to popery and the reformation, which the church experienced, and yet will, between A. D. 756 and 2016; for if to the year 756 we add a *time*, or 360 years, it brings us to A. D. 1116, when Henry V. opposed the ecclesiastical encroachments of Pope Paschal II.

says

says Mosheim: and, to pass over the events which church-history can inform you of, at the end of the three following *half times*, viz. in the years 1296, 1476, and 1656, perhaps in 720 years after A. D. 1116, that is, by A. D. 1836, or *times*, one of the Pope's seven *heads*, or *hills*, may be taken away from him, by some enraged power. At least another *half time*, or 180 years, will put an everlasting end to his usurpation, viz. by A. D. 2016.

From these things I conclude, that the aorist ἐδόθησαν, ver. 14. must be rendered in the plu-perfect tense; *to the woman there had been given two wings*, &c. and as such a rendering of the aorist would have explained many other texts besides this; so I dare not despoil this prophecy of the concinnity which such a rendering of this verse gives; as *the remnant of the woman's seed*, with whom the dragon had gone to make war, ver. 17. might mean the Christians in the valleys of Piedmont, who were protected, in the sixteenth century, by their own fastnesses, and not by the wing of the great eagle; which leads me to observe,

2. That the woman flies on the eastern and western wings of the Roman eagle; for it is said, *there had been given to her*, not as it were, but really, *two wings of a great eagle*: and we know that there were no other two wings,

wings, which did, or could protect her, in the East and West, after A. D. 756, but the *wings* of that empire, which Christ had compared to an *eagle*; Matt. xxiv. 28. Yet it is not said, that the Roman *eagle*, or empire itself was given her; for, though that empire is even now *virtually*, it was not *actually* in being, at A. D. 756, except in its *two great wings*; which *were given her*, merely for the sake of flight: for, in these times, the *ten horns*, or kingdoms, of the beast, had the power in their hands; yet while they were making war with the Lamb, in the person of his wife, wherever the Lord was determined to preserve his church, he stirred up some persons, of truly Roman fortitude and generosity, to snatch her away from these *horns* of the beast, and fly with her into other parts of the wilderness; which seems to be all that is intended by the *two wings given her*; which she sees given her of God in every instance: therefore the *water*, or people, which the serpent cast out of his mouth, after A. D. 756, could not reach to drown her; and, after A. D. 1866, the earth will eminently drink up this flood, especially in the time of the vials; see ver. 15, 16.

When the Roman empire became christian, it defended the church, before and after it was divided into the eastern and western; but
E when

26 *When the Woman will be sun-dressed.*

when the Pope took the power of a beast into his hands, A. D. 756, this woman flew *occasionally*, and repeatedly on its *two wings*, from the enemy, with whom she could not contend; when and where ever God stirred up the spirit of kings, princes, or people, to protect her by flight. She is, however, off from these wings, and *flees* on foot at A. D. 1866, as εφυγεν tells us, ver. 6. and has therefore the greater command of her own motions. And, being at that time *clothed with the sun*, &c.

Verily, not in haste shall she go forth;

And not by flight shall she march along:

For Jehovah shall march in her front;

And the God of Israel shall bring up her rear.

See Bp. Lowth on Is. lii. 12.

But, 3. she was not *sun-dressed* when she flew on these wings; for, (1.) as so dressed, she is spoken of as a great *wonder in heaven*, at A. D. 1866, when the seventh trumpet sounded, ver. 1. which proves that she was not so clothed at A. D. 756, of which ver. 14 speaks: nor would, (2.) such a dress have been suitable to her vehicle, while on the eagle's wings. (3.) She brought forth the *man-child*, soon after she was *sun-dressed*, ver. 1, 2, 5. but she could not safely bring him forth, while *flying*; therefore she was not *sun-dressed* while *flying*. Besides, (4.) under the character of the *two witnesses*, she was *clothed with*

When the Woman will be sun-dressed. 27

with sackcloth, from A. D. 606 to 1866, ch. xi. 3. and therefore she cannot be *sun-dressed*, till some time in the last named year.

But while this animating hope of seeing the church *sun-dressed* is yet delayed, may the *sun of righteousness* daily heal, enlarge, and increase the spiritual growth of thousands around us, of your own soul, and of,

DEAR SIR,

Your affectionate

Taunton,
January 3, 1785.

T. R.

E 2

LETTER

LETTER III.

T O

The Rev. THOMAS CHARLES,

Bala, Merionethshire.

REVEREND SIR,

I AM much obliged to you, and Mr. L. for enabling me to join Mr. J. Mede's admiration at Mr. Potter's *Interpretation of the Number of the Beast*, viz. 666*; of whose book I should probably have taken public notice, if I had seen it before my *Remarks on the Revelation* were printed. I cannot however agree with his idea, either of the *first* or *second* beast; or acquiesce in his proof, either that the city, described Rev. ch. xxi. represents the church militant, or that *Ezekiel's* prophetic temple was commensurate to that city.

* A thin 4to, printed A. D. 1642.

It

It is plain that 666 is the number, not of the *second*, but of the *first* beast; not only because the second beast, whenever he rises, will live wholly and only for the honour of the *first*, Rev. xiii. 11, 12. (for which reason *Irenæus* calls him his *armour-bearer*); but because the *first* beast is visibly intended by the word *beast* six times, ver. 14, 15, 17. and it is also asserted, ver. 17. that the number of the first beast will be given to his worshippers; for he is the last named, and the proper antecedent to the relative *αυτου*, *his*, ver. 17, 18. This wholly sets aside Mr. *Vivian's* scheme*; who, finding the number 666 in the name *Ludovicus*, or *Lewis*, mistook the French King, who is the Pope's first-born son, for the second beast; who (I hope I have proved) is not yet come.

If the number 666 had been *years*; as some have found (A. D. 756 to be near about) the time when the beast arose, by adding 666 to the year of Christ, when, they suppose, this revelation was given; so, beginning these numbers in the unit's place, we may nearly find the time of his fall, by the following proportion, viz. as 6 is to 60, so is 600 to 6000; and soon after the year of the world 6000, that is, by A. D. 2016, it is plain from this book, that the beast will be cast into the lake of fire. It is not however strange, that there is no

* See his Dissertation on Rev. xiii. latter part.

exactness in either of these accounts; for the 666 are not *years*, but *the number of the beast*, that is, *of a man*, whom the Holy Ghost has called by that name; and who, we apprehend, will continue the 1260 years, which are included between A. D. 756 and 2016.

Besides what is said of the *origin, characters, operations*, and *times* of this beast, Rev. ch. xiii. we read of four other things, ver. 14—18. by which he will make himself known, viz. his *mark*, his *image*, his *name*, and *the number of his name*. The three first of these the Holy Ghost has not seen fit to give us; which makes it highly probable, that his name *papa*, the Pope (which is applied to *Anacletus*, in *Ignatius's* first epistle), was inserted into the writings of some of the earliest *fathers*, by some servant of the beast. But though God left it to the beast himself to inform us of his *name*, the Pope; of his *mark*, the sign of the cross; and of his *image*, or picture; yet his *number* was given to St. John, to employ the zeal and wisdom of Christians in those times; who would not have been expected to have found it out, if God had not furnished them with sufficient means for that purpose. But he informed them, that the place of all this tyranny was Rome, *the city which then reigned over the kings of the earth*, ch. xvii. 18. and added, *his number* (not *was*, nor *will* be, but) *ἐστὶ* is now, in the present tense, 666. And while
this

The Beast's Number expressed ænigmatically. 31

this taught them to look for a word, whose numeral letters should express 666, and at the same time describe the future beast, who should reign at Rome, this served to convince them the more, that it was necessary for the safety of the church, that the word should be given them ænigmatically, by $\chi \xi \varsigma$, which expresses his number, 666, viz. χ 600, ξ 60, ς 6.

The word $\Lambdaατρεωσ$, the *Latin man*, answers all these characters; and says *Irenæus**, *Valde verisimile est, It is very probable*; yet he prefers the name $\tauειταν$, *Titan, the sun*, which many esteemed as a divine name. But while either of these names gives us the number of the beast, it seems certain, that his number will be hereafter more publicly discovered, than it is at present; because it is said to Christians now, as well as to those of the first century, *Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast*; because that number is given us in the times of the second beast, who is not yet come; and especially because, in *his* times, as you ingeniously observe, both “the beast himself, “and his followers, will be distinguished from “all others by *the number of his name*; for at “that time, no man may *buy*, or *sell*, but he “who has the *mark, image name, or number* “of the beast upon him.” I apprehend,

* *Contra Hæreses*, lib. v. cap. xxx. p. 445. Grabii 1702.

therefore,

therefore, that in the time of the second beast, the *first* beast will either take to himself the name *Lateinos, Teitan*, or some other name which expresses 666; or perhaps, without any such mask, he will avow the number 666 as his, and as that by which his followers shall be distinguished, and in which they must glory; which will be such an instance of audacious impiety, as the beast himself durst not shew, till the *false prophet* had added the east to his western tyranny. But when he has gained all he wanted, viz. *the earth*, ver. 8, 12, 14. he will freely tell us both his *number*; and how it is that he puts *spirit* into *his image*, and *causes it to speak*, ver 14, 15. Gr. But if his *slaying the witnesses*, A.D. 1862, does not occasion every Christian to consider him as *anathema*, his assuming the number 666 will certainly do it. Yet, even when he most publicly avows that number, God's people may probably still find it their duty, in one sense or other to *count the number of the beast*, even till A. D. 2016, if not to the end of the world.

The command ψηφισατω χξς, *Let him count 666*, ver. 18. certainly implies addition; for nothing can be done with the numbers represented by χξς, till they are added together; as he who is going to build, sits down ψηφισειν, *to count the cost*, adding one article of expence to another, till he has discovered the sum total,

Luke

Luke xiv. 28. as Matthias συγκατεψηφισθη was numbered with the apostles, Acts i. 26. as συνεψηφισαν, they counted the price of the books burnt at Ephesus, ch. xix. 19. or as the white, or black stones, cast into a vessel, were counted, to know the number of votes for, or against a person, who stood candidate for an office; Rev. ii. 17. So far, I apprehend all interpreters are agreed.

But when this number is gained, Mr. *Potter* thinks that the square root of it should be extracted, which is $25^{\frac{41}{51}}$. And accordingly he finds, that “ the first decreed number
 “ of cardinals, parishes, parish-priests, and
 “ churches for baptism in Rome, was 25;
 “ that Rome had 25 gates; that the popish
 “ creed consists of 25 articles; that there were
 “ 25 sessions of the council of *Trent*; that 25
 “ prelates were assembled at the first of them;
 “ and that its articles were signed by 25 arch-
 “ bishops: that the Pope has divided king-
 “ doms into 25 provinces, or dioceses; that
 “ England had heretofore 25 abbots, who had
 “ voices in the parliament house; that there
 “ were 25 monks, friars, and priests, who
 “ sang mass in many of their abbies, priories,
 “ and monasteries; and that this number was
 “ frequent and remarkable in the abbies,
 “ priories, and deaneries of France, England,
 “ and Scotland: that 25 knights of the order
 “ of the *Virgin Mary* were to be resident at
 F “ Rome,

“ Rome, and the same number at Loretto ;
 “ and that this number is remarkable in their
 “ offices of highest note, belonging to the
 “ courts of justice at Rome : that on the top
 “ of *St. Peter's* church there is placed a gilded
 “ cross, 25 hands-breadth in height ; that the
 “ *holy* gate of that church stands open every
 “ 25th year ; that that church has 25 altars ;
 “ and that the great altar of *St. Peter's* is 25
 “ feet high, long, and broad ; that there are
 “ 25 marks, dents, or characters, imprinted
 “ upon all their altars,” (that is, five times
 Christ's five wounds,) “ worn in the arms of
 “ many popish princes, and printed on the
 “ frontispiece of many of their books : that
 “ the Pope's relations are of age at 25 ; that
 “ the 25th year is their jubilee ; and the chief
 “ of their holy-days on the 25th day of the
 “ month.”

This is truly curious ; and the more probable, because, as every root must precede its square, so God's number 12, preceded its square 144 ; and some of the above remarks prove, that the Bishop of Rome paid an attention to the number 25, before himself became a beast, or distinguishable by the number 666. This adds to the evidence, that the Pope is indisputably intended by the beast ; especially as 26 also is a remarkable ecclesiastical number in England and Wales ; and between 25 and 26 lies the exact root of 666. And if he took
such

such methods to notify the root of his number, both before and since he became a beast, there can be no doubt, but that he will hereafter make his number itself as conspicuous upon his worshippers, as the Holy Ghost has asserted that he will; though we know not the exact method in which he will do it. Some, indeed, might have been better satisfied with Mr. Potter's scheme, if there had been no fractions attending the root (though possibly God might by them intimate that there is an essential disorder, both in the beast's and the devil's kingdom): and if he had proved that $\psi\eta\phi\iota\zeta\omega$ ever signifies to *extract the square root*, in any approved Greek author (which, not having an *index verborum* to the Greek classics, I can neither prove nor disprove); yet his success greatly favours your thought, that " $\psi\eta\phi\iota\zeta\omega$ signifies calculation in general, without confining the idea to any one rule of arithmetic;" and makes it probable, that every other possible method of counting the number of the beast, may hereafter disclose new wisdom in this prophetic description.

Yet I am more satisfied with Mr. Potter's position, than with the ground on which he builds it. With 12 and 144, he, very properly, contrasts $25\frac{41}{51}$ and 666, which are the root of the beast's number, and its square. But not to say, that the beast's number itself is given us in scripture, not the root of it, the

36 *God's Number and the Beast's compared.*

place on which he fixes to find the 144, is not at all to his purpose, viz. Rev. xxi. 17. where the thickness of the wall of the New Jerusalem is said to be 144 *cubits*; which cannot be contrasted with 666, the number of the beast, because the latter is much more than the former; and it could not be God's design to intimate, that the security of the *apostate* church was greater than that of the *holy*. Yet as 12 and 144, which are God's numbers, may be properly compared with 25 and 666, the last of which is the beast's; so it is remarkable, that the two first, and the last of these numbers, are, I apprehend, the only numbers in the Greek Testament, which the Holy Ghost has expressed by numeral letters. And these numbers alone being so expressed, and that only in one place, leads us to conclude that they have some relation to each other.

Before Popery began, in the days of *Constantine the Great* (who secularized the ecclesiastical hierarchy), we read, Rev. vii. 4—8. of 144 *thousand sealed of all the tribes of Israel*, that is, 12 *thousand* of every tribe. Now it is observable, that in all these numbers, the *thousands* are expressed by the Greek word *χιλιαδες*; but the 12 and 144 are expressed by numeral letters: 12 is ιβ, that is, ι 10, and β 2; and 144 is ρμδ, that is ρ 100, μ 40, and δ 4. Perhaps these two numbers might be thus expressed, to intimate, that it was not essentially necessary,

necessary, that every common Christian should know, how many *thousands* were converted at that time; which yet they might find out, if they had leisure and ability to inquire. And for similar, as well as other, reasons, the beast's number is expressed by $\chi \xi \varsigma$, 666. And as 12 is the root of 144, and these three numbers, 12, 144, and 666, are expressed in so singular a manner, this gave some reason to expect, that there would be something singular either in 25, the root of 666 (which Mr. Potter so illustrated, thirty years before the year 1672, when, I apprehend, Christ began to hold the *little book* open in his hands, for his servants to read it; see my *Remarks* on ch. x. 2—11.), or else in 443,566. which is 666 multiplied into itself; which may perhaps hereafter appear to be the number of *cardinals*, who have supported the beast's throne, from A. D. 756 to 2016.

From the above three numbers, so particularly marked out by the Holy Ghost, I take also the following proportion, viz. as 12 is to 144, so is 666 to 7992; and perhaps this last may hereafter discover the number of the *kings* or princes, who have worshipped the beast, during his 1260 years, viz. 7992. Or, confining ourselves to the number of the beast, we may observe, that, as 72, which was the number of the elders of Israel in the wilderness, including Moses and Aaron, is the half
of

38 *Farther Uses of the Beast's Number.*

of 144; so the half of 666, that is, 333, may perhaps hereafter appear to have been the number of all the *popes*, who reign from A. D. 756 to 2016: for if there were 81 or 85 Jewish high-priests, from their return out of captivity to the destruction of the temple, and 18 of them from A. D. 1 to 66*, there may probably be more strife for the popedom, in the time of the second beast, than ever; which will increase their number greatly.

I only add, at present, that I am,

REVEREND SIR,

Most affectionately and respectfully yours,

Taunton,
January 4, 1785.

T. R.

* See Lewis's *Origines Hebrææ*, vol. 1. p. 91, 94.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

T O

The Rev. THOMAS CHARLES,

Bala, Merionethshire.

REVEREND SIR,

THE happy persons who have *obtained like precious faith with the apostles*, are certainly bound to *take heed to the sure prophetic word*, till they come to heaven; and if this is what is intended by this phrase, *till the day dawn, and φωσφορος, the day star arise in your hearts*, 2 Pet. i. 19. it suggests this rational and pleasing idea, viz. that the knowledge and happiness of unbodied saints will be gradual and progressive, especially before the resurrection; and Rev. ch. xxi. seems to make it probable, that it will be so afterwards.

I see nothing in the last named chapter but what perfectly agrees with the idea of heaven.

If

If ver. 24. is thought to be an objection to this, reading *αὐτῶ* for *αὐτῶν** gives us this sense of the words, viz. that those who had been *kings of the earth bring glory to him into it*, that is, into heaven. Or, taking the words as in our translation, "If," says Dr. Doddridge, "you were to conceive all the monarchs upon earth, uniting all their treasures to adorn one single place, they could produce nothing comparable to what I then saw." But considering what is said of this city, which follows the account of the general judgment, we must certainly conclude, that the Holy Ghost speaks here after his own proper style and manner, viz. of a spiritual glory. The church militant had been long pestered and disguised with the temporal glories of the world; they shall not pollute heaven too. Besides, what suitableness would there be, between the temporal glories of kings and emperors, and a city 1500 miles *high*, whose *temple and light is God and the Lamb*, seen face to face; and whose immortal provision is the *twelve manner of fruits*, which the *tree of life* yields every month? ch. xxii. 2—5. This city also did not appear to John, till after the general resurrection and judgment, ch. xx. 11—15. and till *the first heaven and the first earth were passed away*, ch. xxi. 1. and the *glory which these kings bring into it*, must be

* See in Dr. Mill's Gr. Test.

suitable to a city which comes down from heaven to the new earth, to be the residence of God and of the Lamb.

I have long apprehended, that the heaven we hope for, after the resurrection, will be in that *new heaven* and *new earth*, which are spoken of ver. 1, 2. and promised 2 Pet. iii. 13. for God's *works*, for the future rest of his people, *were finished*, not before, but *from the foundation of the world*, Heb. iv. 3. and from that time the *kingdom* they are to *inherit*, was, by a creating Fiat, *prepared for them*, Mat. xxv. 34. and, though it is not said, ver. 41. when the *everlasting fire*, into which devils and damned spirits will be cast, was *prepared*; yet as Satan seems to be an appendage to this world, and has not, as we know of, been permitted to seduce any other, therefore I consider him as *reserved in everlasting chains under darkness* here, *to the judgment of the great day*, Jude 6. and apprehend, that the abyfs, or *bottomless pit*, into which he will be *cast*, A. D. 2016, Rev. xx. 1—3. and *the lake of fire and brimstone*, into which he will follow the *beast* and the *false prophet*, a little before the day of judgment, ver. 10. as well as the place, where finners of Adam's family are to be tormented for ever, will be first in the old and then in the new earth; see ch. xxi. 8. *for the heavens and the earth, which now are, are reserved unto*
G fire,

fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men, which we know, will be eternal, 2 Pet. iii. 7. for, saith the Lord, a fire is kindled in mine anger, which hath burned, and shall burn, to the lowest hell, Deut. xxxii. 22. and that hell is, with respect to our present situation, beneath, Prov. xv. 24. and persecutors especially shall go into the lower parts of the earth, Ps. lxiii. 9. an horrid bundle for eternal fire. So καταχθονίων, Phil. ii. 10. may rather be understood of persons, than of things under the earth, which shall bow to the name of Jesus, viz. devils and damned spirits. So Homer describes Tartarus, or hell, into which the apostle says the devils were cast; see 2 Pet. ii. 4. as a deep gulf under the earth, where there are iron gates, and a brazen entrance.*

Of this everlasting destruction, at the great day, *Sodom and Gomorrah* are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7. and *Gebenna*, or the valley of the son of *Hinnom*, was another representation of hell, yet nearer to Jerusalem. And to say nothing of *volcanos*, or burning mountains, which are natural figures of that *lake of fire and brimstone*, probably God will give the world a third witness of this everlasting fire, in the burning of Rome, A. D. 2016; see ch. xix. 3.

* See Iliad, θ, l. 13—15.

Does it fill you with horror, to think how near to loitering finners around us, that *place of torment is*, between which and heaven a *gulf is fixed!* and yet more to see hell still nearer in some who are judicially hardened, John xii. 39, 40. and who, with Jerusalem finners, are sporting even with a *tophet*, near their gates, because they do not yet feel its fires! Oh! may these sensible representations of the torments of the damned, animate us to greater zeal than ever, to snatch *brands* from the everlasting *burnings*; and surely, none but devils, and those who are like them, will desire to obstruct us in this work.

When you are with God, seeking help in this all-important, but arduous ministry, do not forget,

DEAR SIR,

Your affectionate Brother and Servant,

Taunton,
January 5, 1785.

T. R.

- G 2

POSTSCRIPT.

P O S T S C R I P T.

IF this page should meet the eye of any gentleman, whom providence has indulged with learned leisure, I beg leave to name to him the following *desiderata*, viz.

1. An *index verborum* to the *Greek* classics, which would certainly assist the sacred critic to elucidate, or amplify the meaning of some parts of the New Testament.

2. As the Hebrew language is of high antiquity ; and, for any thing that appears to the contrary, might be that which the *father of lights* taught our first parent in Eden* ; and probably remained uncorrupted, amidst the confusions of *Babel*, in the pious family of *Heber* ; who, I should hope, had no hand in that daring *tower*, from the manner in which he transmits to posterity his painful sense of the miseries of the *division* which it occasioned, in the name of his son *Peleg* (whence *πელαγος*,

* See what is said of language in general, *Monthly Review*, Oct. 1784, p. 274—282.

pelagus,

pelagus, plug, and plague) ; as well as, perhaps, in his other son *Joktan* (יֶקֶט 3. *sing. fut. hophal*, of יֶקֶט q. *kitten*), which signifies *he will be made small*. As this is a radical language ; probably persons who are equal to the inquiry, would find Hebrew in most, if not in all the languages upon earth, ancient or modern. It is at least certain, that, if any gentleman will carefully trace the different streams of speech up to this spring, he will find much more Hebrew in the Greek, Latin, French, and English, and especially in the latter, than Mr. *Parkhurst* has (in general, so properly) pointed out in his *Hebrew and Greek* lexicons. And I cannot but apprehend, that an attention to this idea, might lead on to an easier, as well as to a more speedy method of teaching the Hebrew language compleatly, than has hitherto been generally adopted ; and eventually minister to the accomplishment of some prophecies, which are, even now, hastening to open upon the world their glorious scenes.

3. From the prophecies of the Old and New Testament, I doubt not but that there might now be drawn forth, with much clearness and precision, an exact account of the principal events which are to befall the *Jews*, from this time to the end of the world ; together with the times of most of those events. We know not which of his servants
 Jesus

Jesus Christ will stimulate to attend to these things : but, as these are cares worthy of his heart, with him I chearfully leave them, and my own declining life ; which I wish to wear away in humble ministrations before him.

REMARKS

R E M A R K S

O N T H E

THREE FIRST CHAPTERS

O F

The Revelation of St. *John*.

R E M A I N S

O F T H E

THREE FIRST CHAPTERS

O F

The Revolution of St. John

R E M A R K S

On the THREE FIRST CHAPTERS of

The REVELATION of St. *JOHN*.

C H A P. I.

THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him ; to shew to his servants the things which must shortly be *done*. And, sending by his angel, he signified *them* to his servant John.

2 Who testified the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ, and whatsoever things he saw.

3 Happy he that reads, and they that hear, the words of prophecy, and keep the things which are written in it ; for the time *is* at hand.

H

When

When God gave the human soul of Christ the honour of a union to the second person in the Godhead, John xvii. 22. that union promised his created spirit, all those discoveries of God, which it was capable of ; which yet were to be dispensed at such times, and in such degrees as best suited the ends for which he became incarnate. While our Lord was upon earth, though his godhead *knew the Father*, as perfectly and comprehensively as *the Father knew him*, Mat. xi. 27. yet, in his human nature, he *increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man*, Luke ii. 52. and, as he was taught, he spake, and *made known* to his disciples, *all things which he had then heard of his Father*, John viii. 28. xv. 15. But having received this farther *revelation* (either immediately upon his ascension to heaven, or rather when he had only one apostle left upon earth, and he was in banishment), *he sent and signified it*, both in plain words, and strong expressive signs, *ἐσημαρην*, by his angel, or messenger, to his servant John ; who witnessed the word of God in general, this prophetic testimony of Jesus Christ in particular, and whatsoever things he saw. Observe,

1. It is a notion that leads to deism, to suppose, that the knowledge of prophecy is unattainable, and does not concern us, till the things predicted are accomplished : therefore
to

to preserve us from such a thought, this concluding prophecy (which was certainly designed to illustrate and explain some preceding) is prefaced with these words, ver. 3. *Happy that minister or Christian who reads, and happy he who intelligently hears, not only the words of this book, but της προφητειας of prophecy in general, so as to keep the things which are written in it; for the time is at hand: as though he had said, "God is going to work; therefore come and see, in this prophetic glass, what he will do in every age."* He that will not read prophecies, is likely to read history to little advantage; for there is a connection and similarity in the works of God. But to *despise prophecies*, is to despise that which by way of eminence is *the testimony of Jesus*, ch. xix. 10. *Gr. to quench the spirit*, who holds forth the wisdom and grace of God in them; and to make light of the *happiness* he offers us; see 1 Thes. v. 19, 20. And, as this book in particular is a revelation of the nature, person, offices, and grace of the Lord Jesus, as they are severally to be opened to our view, in his government of the church and the world; see 2 Cor. xii. 1. a revelation which had been promised to him, John v. 20. xiv. 12. was given as a present reward of his sufferings, Phil. ii. 6—10. Rev. iii. 21. and given *that he should shew it unto his servants*: a revelation which our Lord accordingly delivers with a peculiar air of triumph and

52 *About the Year of Judgment may be known.*

joy, ch. i. 13—18. and which makes every man *happy* who *reads, hears, and keeps* it; come, therefore, Christians, and *acquaint* yourselves with *the things which are here freely given to you of God*, by way of anticipation, and before many of them occur.

2. While Christ was yet with us, he said, that no being in heaven or earth, but *his Father*, knew *the day or hour* of judgment, Mat. xxiv. 36. Mark xiii. 32. But as that judgment will certainly be at the end of the world; and he has, in this prophecy, given us an account of time, which reaches to about A. D. 3125, and no farther, if his human soul did not then know the *year* of judgment, he certainly received an account of it by this revelation. Yet, for any thing that appears to the contrary, he might then know the *year*: at least, the adumbrations which he then used to represent the day of judgment, intimated to his disciples, that about the *year* of it would certainly be notified before it came, though not the *day and hour*; see the remarks on ch. xx. 11—15. Therefore, upon the credit of that hint, St. Paul assures the *Thessalonians*, 1 epist. v. 1—8. that, while *that day* came *as a thief in the night* to the wicked, it should not *overtake* God's people *as a thief*; and as their being *of the light, and of the day*, gave them some idea of the *times and seasons*, they had the more reason to expect that their
light

light would be improved (as it is by this revelation), because Christ had said, *To you that hear shall more be given*, Mark iv. 24.

3. Though most of the striking figures of this book are borrowed from the Old Testament; yet, whatever allusions there are in the epistles, or in the subsequent prophecy, to things which are past, to understand this book, it must be carefully observed, that its design was not to describe things which had been; for our author is only ordered, ch. i. 19. *Write the things which thou hast seen, even the things which are, and the things which shall be after this A. D. 96.* I cannot, therefore, with Mr. Kershaw*, understand part of this book of things, which occurred before the birth of Christ: for this is not a history, but a PROPHECY; to shew *his servants things that must shortly come to pass*; ch. i. 1.

4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia. Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from him who is, and who was, and who is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne;

5 And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-begotten from the

* See his *Essay on the Revelation*, 2 vols. 12mo. 1780.

dead,

54 *The Apostle prays for the Churches.*

dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

6 And hath made us kings and priests to God, even his Father, to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, even they who pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth shall wail because of him. Surely. Amen.

8 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord; who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.

This revelation, which concerns the *servants of God* in general, ver. 1. is addressed to the *seven churches in Asia Minor*, ver. 4. to whom we therefore naturally suppose that the whole book is directed, as we find no part of it afterwards addressed to any others. And here,

I. The apostle prays for them; and his prayers will be heard for the saints of the time being,

being, to the end of the world, ver. 4, 5. He that had learned to *pray always*, could not but do it upon so extraordinary an occasion, as the giving of this *revelation*. When heaven opens with grace, the heart should open in gratitude and duty. And no man should take this book in hand, without praying for light to understand, and grace to improve it. *Grace be unto you*, which comprehends all the parts of that great salvation which is wrought in, or designed for us ; and *peace*, which imports our sweet sense, and present enjoyment of it. And both these are asked from the *Father, Son, and Spirit*, to whom we are devoted in baptism, and avouch as our God.

1. In his prayer, he lays hold on the *grace and peace of him, who is, who was, and who is to come*. This is a literal translation of the word *Jehovah* ; which being, in scripture, applied to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, teaches us, that in this, as in all our prayers, the whole Godhead is addressed ; whose being comprehends all times, and controuls whatever occurrences therein can either minister to, or militate against our happiness ; see ver. 8. But he also afterwards prays to the *Spirit* and the *Son*, with relation to their offices in the grand scheme of our salvation ; and lays hold of *the grace and peace*,

2. Of

56 *Christ our Prophet, Priest, and King.*

2. Of the Spirit, here called *the seven spirits which are before the throne*; whose various grace is dispensed in such natural, moral, political, and divine gifts, as his wisdom designed for the respective use of each of the seven periods of the church; for which purposes, this omnipresent Spirit is represented, as *before the throne* of grace here, and of glory in heaven.

3. Of the Lord Jesus; as he executes the offices of prophet, priest, and king. (1.) *Grace and peace* are sought from him, as *the faithful witness*; who, by his person, as *God-man, Immanuel*, as well as by his works of nature and grace, testifies to every man those things, which he effectually teaches the elect, by his word, spirit, ministers, ordinances, and providences. Happy souls who have this omniscient, omnipresent *witness* for their guide! He testifies only *what he has seen*. (2.) From Christ the priest, who having by his death finished the painful part of that character, became, in his own right, such a *first-born from the dead*, as can have no *second*, to succeed him in the same way. Yet as this *first-born* has all his people in himself, they must rise after him, in a long succession, from under every effect of the curse, in his right. (3.) From that *ruler of the kings of the earth*, who raises up and employs, what royal or other instruments he pleases; and turns about their *hearts, as rivers*

rivers of water are turned ; which always run with a downward course, agreeable to their own nature ; yet frequently meet with such obstructions, as direct them into channels, very different from what they would otherwise have taken ; Prov. xxi. 1.

II. He breaks forth in strains of praise to the blessed Jesus. If there is *glory* there must be *praise* on earth, as well as in heaven. And to abound in prayer, for ourselves and others, is the likely way to be able to say, with full assurance, *To him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood*, which was shed for their remission ; and will therefore renovate our nature, for the enjoyment of God and glory ; yea, to him who has already invested us with the spiritual authority and dominion of *kings, and the sacred ministry of priests to his God and Father* ; to him be all *the glory and dominion*, which heaven and earth can ascribe *for ever and ever. Amen.* And, that none may continue indifferent about it, whether they are found in tune for his praise or not,

III. He predicts his second coming, and the deep and lasting impression which this will make upon his enemies, ver. 7. *Behold*, for you may now see a proof of this in your own nature ; whenever therefore you are dragged before the home-tribunal of your own consciences, say,

I

Certainly

58 *The Alpha and Omega cometh with Clouds.*

Certainly *He* the great head of every man cometh with clouds ; not as once to his own things in Judea, John i. 11. for all things, in every place, are now seen to be his own : therefore every eye shall see him, even they who pierced him, and who would gladly now turn their eyes from the terrifying sight. They would not here look upon him, nor mourn, Zech. xii. 10. John xix. 37. therefore all the tribes of the earth shall now wail, because of him. Surely. And, while John is adding his *Amen* of confirmation and consent to this,

IV. Christ himself stands forth, and seals this solemn thought by his own names and glory, ver. 8. *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord ; who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.* The Lord Jesus manifestly applies some of these characters to himself, ver. 11. and ch. xxii. 13. though some of them had been, but just before, spoken of the Father, ver. 4. to whom they are certainly all applicable. But if one appropriate character of the Father belongs to Christ, they may be all applied to him ; and these must, for no man hath seen God at any time, John i. 18. as our apostle now saw, and heard the voice of his Son ; who here assumed the titles which had been applied to the Father, to intimate, that, as God, he is essentially in the Father, and the Father in him.

9 I John, who *am* both your brother, and partner in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle called Patmos ; for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

10 I was in the spirit on the Lord's day ; and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet,

11 Saying, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last. And what thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* to the seven churches which *are* in Asia ; to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.

12 And I turned to see the voice which spake with me ; and being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.

13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks, *one* like the son of man ; clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girded about the breasts with a golden girdle.

14 His head and *his* hairs *were* white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes as a flame of fire.

15 And his feet like fine brags, as purified in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and his countenance *was* as the sun shineth in his strength.

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet, as dead: and he laid his right hand upon me; saying to me, Fear not, I am the first and the last.

18 Even he who lives, and was dead; and behold, I am living for ever and ever. Amen. And I have the keys of the unseen world, and of death.

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, even the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks *is this*;
the

the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are seven churches.

In these words,

I. We have our author's description of himself,

1. By his name. It was not proper, that a prophecy of such vast importance as this, should be anonymous: yea, to silence infidelity, his name (like *Hosea's*, ch. i. 1, 2.) is mentioned three times, ver. 1, 4, 9. viz. *John*, which signifies *the grace*, or favour of *God*. His name, however is plain; for as the world seldom gives its honours to God's favourites; and the more men are such, the less they desire them: so titles of worldly honour added to our author, would have been only like painting a diamond, or varnishing the sun.

2. By his relation to the persons whom he addresses, *I am your brother*; a title which I value more than that of an apostle, which only served to hasten *Judas* to *his own place*. I am also *your partner in tribulation*, as well as *in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ*. And, while these our characters demand an intercourse with heaven, they cannot but adapt

us to enjoy, and therefore endear this *revelation* from thence.

3. By his outward state, when he received this revelation. *I was*, by the imperial mandate, *in the little isle of Patmos*; not for any crime, either against the state, or any of its subjects; but *for the word of God*, which I durst not secrete in my heart; and *for that testimony of Jesus Christ*, which every thing sacred called me to bear.

4. By the frame of mind in which this vision found him, ver. 10. *I was in the spirit on the Lord's day*, that is, my soul was so taken up with divine meditations, as to be greatly inattentive to material scenes around me. The Spirit was in *Balaam*, and put prophetic words into the mouth of *Caiaphas*; but our apostle was *in the spirit on the Lord's day*; and perhaps, in that one ever memorable day, he received the whole revelation of this book; which, as it was given to *John* on a *seventh* after *six* day's labour, will be fully opened to Christians, by the Spirit, in the *seventh* or *sabbatical* millenary. What he farther says of himself, viz. of his turning aside *to see* whose *voice spake with him*; and his so feeling the judgment of the law in his conscience, as to *fall as dead at his feet when he saw him*, stands connected with,

II. The account which he gives, of what he saw and heard from Christ. First, he *heard a great voice*, which sounded *behind* him (to remind him of what our Lord had spoken from the beginning to Adam, Abraham, Moses, prophets, and apostles; see Is. xxx. 21.); a voice *as of a trumpet*, which awoke all his soul to that message, which the whole earth must hear and heed, ver. 10, &c. *saying*, while high and low despise me, know thou, that *I am the Alpha, and the Omega*; and, as such, ought to be *the first and the last* in the designs, labours, and hopes of every man. Therefore *what thou*, at the present time, or hereafter, *seest, write in a book*; and *send it*, in my name, *to the seven churches which are in Asia*, in the following order, viz. *to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea*; which lie in the several provinces of Ionia, Lydia, Mysia, and Phrygia, in Asia Minor.

Hearing this order, *I turned*, says our author, *to see the person whose voice spake with me*; and *being turned*, *I saw seven golden* (not *λαμπαδας*, lamps, but *λυχνιας*,) *candlesticks*, placed in the exactest order. These *candlesticks* remind us, that this is a dark world: but, while vain philosophy darkens it more and more, and *the world by wisdom knows not God*, the God-man resolves to illuminate it;
and

and sets up his light first, not in the schools of literature, but on his *candlesticks* the churches, Mat. v. 15. and we hope hereafter to make it appear, that these *seven golden candlesticks* represent all those Christian societies of every name and age, on which the *seven horns*, and *seven eyes of the lamb*, which are the *seven spirits of God*, display their various glory and grace.

But the light of these candlesticks would, in every instance, shine in vain to distempered eyes, if the every where present Jesus was not among them, with his all-animating influence, and restoring grace. Therefore, *in the midst of these seven golden candlesticks* (as a sun amongst the planets, as the heart in the human body, or as *the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God*), our author saw one, who, through all the splendor of this glorious scene, retained so much of the former *likeness* of the *son of man*, that he was at no loss to determine who it was. He was habited as a priest, that is, *clothed with a garment down to his feet, and girded about the breast with a golden girdle*; see Exod. xxviii. 4, 8. xxix. 5. as well to shew John his present attention to the work of mediation; and that, though he was now in heaven, he was still a prophet, priest, and king upon earth; as to intimate, in this sensible and visible manner, that he will successively, to the end of time, *cover* his people, who are *predestinated*

predestinated to be conformed to his image, with the robe of his righteousness, and clothe them with the garments of salvation ; If. lxi. 10.

These *candlesticks* were all *golden*, resplendent, rich, and beautiful ; yet one might be larger than another, especially so the *Philadelphian* ; though all were made according to its own decreed size and weight ; see *Exod. xxv. 39.* But to make this vision answer our Lord's design (which was to represent his illuminating the earth, in every age, by his churches and ministers), two things must be here especially noticed, which contributed much to the grandeur of this scene.

1. Being *candlesticks* in God's house, each had *seven branches*, *Exod. xxv. 32.* and *Josephus* says*, "every branch had seven lamps, ver. 37. "which shone like the seven planets." Therefore, probably, every candlestick in this vision had 49 lamps, which were in all 343, *Rev. i. 20.* If only seven literal churches had been intended, they might have been represented by seven lamps ; see *Gen. xv. 17.* Yet, while these ramifications from each candlestick, gave our author an idea, how churches would be successively lighted up from others, they might also intimate to him, that every church, which is here adumbrated by a candlestick,

* Book III. ch. vi. § 7.

besides their meeting together on the Lord's days, should assemble in lesser companies, on other days of the week, to worship God; see Heb. x. 25. Probably there were such little assemblies among the Israelites, encamped in the wilderness; and perhaps their *synagogues* and *proseuchæ*, or prayer houses, in after-times, might be used for the same purposes.

In Solomon's temple there were *ten candlesticks*, 2 Chron. v. 7. whose 70 *branches* might represent the 70 *disciples*, whom Christ employed to illuminate Judea; as their 490 lamps might signify the more numerous ministers of the gentile church.

2. These *seven candlesticks* seem to have been all illuminated: for the seven Asiatic churches were in being, when John saw this vision; and Christ's walking among the candlesticks, habited as a priest, to trim these lamps, proves that they were lighted. And it is likely John was up early on the *Lord's day* morning; and saw this grand vision, while yet the darkness of the night illustrated the necessity of the light which was set up in these candlesticks; though, no doubt, God could have made these lights visible to him, above the beams of the day afterwards. Observe, If sleep shortens our sabbaths, it will impoverish our souls. *Arise; the master calleth thee.*

The candlestick in the tabernacle perhaps projected its branches east and west; and the middle, or shaft light, say the Jews*, “when it was out, was lighted from the fire of the altar; but the other lamps were lighted from those which were nearest to it;” and so it was in this case. The apostolic church, we know, was lighted up from off the fire on that altar Christ, that is, immediately from heaven; and all other churches were instrumentally lighted from that. Therefore, the Ephesian or apostolic candlestick stood in the centre of this vision, which John saw; at least, the threatening to *remove it out of its place*, implied that it had occupied a place of peculiar dignity. Around this candlestick, I apprehend, stood the other six, which had been successively lighted from it, in a circular form; for Christ’s *walking*, *ἐν μέσῳ*, *in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*, implied, that there was one on either hand of him while walking round the middle one. If such a person as the Lord Jesus walks in the *midst* of these *candlesticks*, he cannot but communicate some influence to each, at the same time: yet, when his face was towards one, John must necessarily see his back turned to another. And his face was now, and always, towards the central candlestick, which, at present, was the Ephesian, which represented the then present, the

* See *Ainsworth* on Exod. xxvii. 21.

apostolic period. And when this candlestick was gradually removed, from the centre to the circumference of this prophetic scene, if each of the other candlesticks were successively in the centre, during the time allotted to the period which it represented; then Christ would still walk, *ἐν μέσῳ*, in the midst of the seven candlesticks, exactly as in the time of the Ephesian period, that is, having a candlestick on his right and left hand: and also each successive period will be lighted from, or affected by the central candlestick; though the apostolic church alone had this honour, to have been immediately lighted from heaven, and to have instrumentally communicated light to the remotest, as well as to all intermediate churches.

These candlesticks, as lighted, could not but give our author a pleasing idea of Christ's illuminating the world by his gospel, through his churches and ministers. And these candlesticks, placed in the above order, would furnish six ranks, containing each three candlesticks, placed in a strait line, as may be seen, by representing the seven *candlesticks* by seven *stars* (which rise and set gradually), as in the next page; and looking at every external star, which gives you a rank of three *candlesticks*; which may remind us of, though nothing created can represent, the trinity; while the six ranks suggest this idea, that, by about A. M. 6000, these

these candlesticks, or churches will begin to shine in their radiant glory.

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I only add, on this subject, that, though it is impossible we should find out the exact number of churches in any period; yet as these celestial societies must increase upon the earth, the following may give us some numerical representation of their advance, viz. multiply the 343 lamps of this whole vision, by 49, the lamps of each candlestick, for the first period; by twice 49 for the second; by three times 49 for the third, and so on of the rest; and this will give,

For

		Churches.
For the Ephesian period,	343×49 that is	16,807
Smyranean ditto,	343×98 —	33,614
Pergamean ditto,	343×147 —	50,421
Thyatirian ditto,	343×196 —	67,228
Sardian ditto,	343×245 —	84,035
Philadelphian ditto,	343×294 —	100,842
Laodicean ditto,	343×343 —	117,649

But while the above gives us an account, not how the churches *did*, but how they *might* increase from the number *seven*, we hasten to take a farther view of *him*, who is the light and glory of each.

When the *ancient of days* made himself visible to *Daniel*, his garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool, ch. vii. 9. So when our apostle saw him in Patmos, ver. 14—16. *his head was white like wool, and his hairs white as the newly-fallen snow; and his eyes as a flame of fire*, to consume his enemies, but rekindle the heavenly flame in the hearts of his servants. *And his feet like fine brass, when purified in a furnace*; so that his people might see their own faces in his feet, as well as the purity of every step he takes. *And his voice was as the sound of many waters*; as when the floods clap their hands in the midst of the sea, or as noisy billows dash against the rocky shore. *And he had in his right hand seven stars. And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword*, for the
the

the destruction of his enemies, east and west, whether in or out of his church. And when he has smitten them down to the ground, and trodden the wine-press of the wrath of God, *his countenance* will appear to all his friends, as here to John, viz. *as when the sun shineth in his noon-day strength*, to draw forth life from the bosom of the earth; to give the nations, and especially his people, day; and at the same time, to torment those who hate the light. But though all this glory was friendly to our apostle, feeling his own guilt and misery, he *fell as dead at his feet*; to shew us how unfit the best of men are, in this world, to see God eye to eye; and that *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*. It was not, however, our Lord's design to overwhelm his servant with his glory. He must live and serve him, here; therefore he *laid his right hand upon him, saying, Fear not* (which words occur about sixty times in the Bible); *I am the first and the last, even he who lives and was dead: and behold! to thy comfort, I am living for ever and ever. Amen. And I have the keys of the unseen world; and of death*, the entrance into it; and remove my friends and enemies, when and how I please, into the place of their everlasting settlement, ver. 17, 18. Having thus recovered him, our Lord added, ver. 19, 20. *Write the things which thou hast seen*; and as he knew, at present, of nothing that he was to write, but this vision, and the seven epistles,
it

it was natural for him to consider the *things which* he had *seen*, as containing a representation, both of *the things which are*, and of *the things which shall be hereafter* in the churches; for which reason I render the first *και even*, ver. 19. He adds, To furnish you with a key to this vision, know that, though there is some *mystery in the seven stars*, and *the seven golden candlesticks*; the former signify *the angels of the seven churches*, and the latter *the seven churches themselves*; which may give you an idea both of their general design, and of the continuance of both; as long as *stars* adorn the sky, or *candlesticks* are needful in a dark world.

C H A P. II.

1 To the angel of the Ephesian church, write. These things saith he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience; and that thou canst not bear those who are evil. And thou hast tried those who give out *that* they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.

3 And

3 And hast borne, and hast patience; and, for my name, hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

4 Nevertheless, I have *this* against thee, that thou hast left thy first love.

5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen; and repent, and do thy first works: or if not, I will come to thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his place; except thou repent.

6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans; which I also hate.

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches. To him who overcomes, *even* to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

8 And to the angel of the church of the Smyrneans, write. These things saith the first and the last; who was dead, and is alive.

9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich). And

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I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews, and are not ; but *are* the synagogue of Satan.

10 Fear none of the things which thou art about to suffer. Behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried ; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches. He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second death.

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos, write. These things saith he who has the sharp two-edged sword.

13 I know thy works ; and where thou dwellest, where Satan's throne *is* : and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith ; even in the days in which Antipas *was* my faithful martyr, who was slain among you ; where Satan dwelleth.

14 Never-

14 Nevertheless, I have a few things against thee; because thou hast there, those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel; to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication.

15 So thou hast also, those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans; which I hate.

16 Repent; or else I will come to thee quickly; and will fight against them, with the sword of my mouth.

17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, I will give to him to eat of the hidden manna; and I will give him a white stone; and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows, but he that receiveth it.

18 And to the angel of the church in Thyatira, write. These things saith the Son of God, who hath his

eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet like fine brass.

19 I know thy works, and love, and service, and faith, and thy patience ; and thy works ; and the last *to be* more than the first.

20 Nevertheless, I have a few things against thee ; because thou permittest that woman Jezabel, who calleth herself a prophetess, to teach, and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.

21 And I gave her time that she might repent of her fornication ; and she repented not.

22 Behold I cast her into a bed ; and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their works.

23 And I will kill her children with death. And all the churches shall know, that I am he that searcheth reins and hearts ; and I will give to every

every one of you according to your works.

24 But to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira ; as many as do not hold this doctrine ; and who have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak ; I will lay upon you no other burden.

25 But what ye have, hold fast till I come.

26 And he that conquers, and keeps my works to the end ; I will give him authority over the nations.

27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron ; as the vessels of a potter, shall they be broken to pieces ; as I also have received of my father.

28 And I will give him the morning star.

29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches.

C H A P. III.

1 And to the angel of the church in Sardis, write. These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the

the seven stars. I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

2 Be watchful ; and strengthen the things which remain, which are about to die ; for I have not found thy works filled up in the sight of God.

3 Remember therefore how thou hast received, and heard ; and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief ; and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, who have not defiled their garments ; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

5 He that overcometh, he shall be clothed in white raiment ; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life ; but I will confess his name before my father, and before his angels.

6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches.

7 And

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia, write. These things saith the Holy One, the true; he who hath the key of David; who openeth, and no one shuts; and shutteth and no one opens.

8 I know thy works. Behold, I have given before thee an open door; and no one can shut it. Because thou hast a little strength; and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

9 Behold I make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come, and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience; I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which is about to come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

11 Behold I come quickly; hold fast that which thou hast, that no one may take thy crown.

12 He

12 He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God (of the New Jerusalem, which cometh down from heaven from my God); and my new name.

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches.

14 And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans, write. These things saith the Amen, the faithful, and true witness; the ruler of the creation of God.

15 I know thy works; that thou art neither cold nor hot. I wish thou wert cold or hot.

16 So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

17 Because thou sayst, I am wealthy, and have enriched myself, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and pitiable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

18 I

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried by fire, that thou mayst be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayst be clothed; and *that* the shame of thy nakedness may not appear. And anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayst see.

19 Whomsoever I love, I reprove and chasten. Be zealous therefore, and repent.

20 Behold, I have stood at the door, and *now* knock. If any one shall hear my voice, and open the door; I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21 To him that overcometh, I will give *even* to him, to sit with me on my throne; as I also overcame, and am set down with my father on his throne.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches.

In the year 1778, considering these epistles to the seven churches in Asia, as containing only a *literal* description of their several states, together with suitable promises and

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threatenings to each, I began my *Remarks on*, what I then understood to be, *the prophetic part of this revelation*, at ch. iv. but since that time, I have been satisfied, that the epistles before us are to be understood PROPHETICALLY, as well as *literally*.

They are certainly to be taken *literally*; for those words in every epistle, *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches*, which direct them also to professors and churches of a similar description, suppose that they had been before directed to some particular church or churches; whom they had especially reproved or comforted. The *seven churches* are also certainly intended by *the things which are*, ch. i. 19. (though, at the same time, the former words prove, that the epistles will be interesting to every one, *that hath an ear to hear*, to the end of the world; and nothing hinders but that they may be so, in the order in which they are placed.) Besides, as John saw *seven golden candlesticks*, and Christ *walking* in the midst of them; and heard him say, *The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks are the seven churches*, ch. i. 20. he must certainly understand these churches literally. The churches themselves also could not but consider what was addressed to each, as especially designed for them; as there was the same reason to suppose, that the epistles which our Lord
ordered

ordered John to send to them, were as really intended for them, as those which *St. Paul* wrote to the same, or other churches. Nor would it be any honour to scripture, to consider any of its histories as *merely* figurative, where the *literal* sense implies no contradiction.

From this *literal* sense of the epistles, it follows, (1.) That they were not written under *Nero's*, but *Domitian's* persecution, viz. about A. D. 96; for as *St. Paul* spoke highly of the love of the Ephesians, ch. i. 19. about A. D. 63, it is not likely that they should have *left* it by the year 69, in which *Nero* died. Besides, what is said of *Antipas*, the *Nicolaitans*, &c. required farther distance of time from the first planting of the gospel. Nor did *Nero's* persecutions reach the provinces, to affect *Smyrna*, as is mentioned in the epistle to that city*. (2.) There were churches, then existing, in all those cities; though *Epiphanius*, who was born A. D. 332, seems to allow, with the heretical Alogi, that, “at the time of *St. John's* writing “these epistles, there was no Christian church “at *Thyatira*, and some other of these places.” But, as that *father* was zealous against the worship of saints and images, I submit it to the learned, whether the inaccuracies with

* See *Lardner's* Supplement to the Credibility, &c. P. 374—379.

84 *There were Churches in these Cities*, A. D. 96.

which Dr. *Cave*, *Bayle*, *Dupin*, *Mosheim*, and others have charged him, may not have been occasioned, in part at least, by his writings having been interpolated, altered, and spoiled, by some servants of the *beast*. Some of these pious tricks *Daillé* exposes, in his *Use of the Fathers*, p. 34—68. And, as the epistles of *Ignatius*, to Smyrna, Ephesus, and Philadelphia, which are accounted genuine, suppose that there were churches there, when that disciple of St. John addressed them; so Dr. *Cave* tells us, that *Melito*, Bishop of Sardis, presented an apology for the Christians to the Emperor, about A. D. 170*. And their opinion, who suppose that there was no church in some of these cities, till 200 years after Christ, is the less probable, considering their nearness to the scene of apostolic action; on which account, I had rather suppose, for instance, of *Thyatira*, that an idolatrous Jezabel had, for a time, annihilated the church there, soon after St. John had written his epistle to them, ch. ii. 18, &c. than imagine the excellent *Lydia* to have neglected to request some of the messengers of salvation, to go and evangelize her native city, Acts xvi. 14.

If indeed any *positive* proof could be adduced, that there was no Christian church at *Thyatira*, when the apostle wrote these epistles,

* *Lives of the Fathers*, p. 101, 180.

this would much favour the *prophetic* sense : yet while, at present, I have no idea of Christ's speaking of this revelation, only as an account of things *which must be done shortly*, ch. i. 1. if some of them had been *past*, at the time when the churches received this account ; nor of his reprovng crimes in any place, which never existed there ; nor of his calling others to *bear*, what he has said to those, with whom it was yet naturally impossible that he should have conversed ; it is the more easy to conceive of a *prophetic* sense of these epistles, couched under the *literal*,

1. Because there are innumerable instances, in the Old Testament, in which God's words are to be understood partly literally, and partly prophetically. So many things said of David, and of some others, ultimately refer to Christ ; and prophecies respecting Israel, will be partly verified in the literal, and partly in the spiritual *Israel of God*. So, while every man's moral seed-time and *harvest* bear a relation to each other, ch. xiv. 15, 18. God will make the sins and plagues of *Sodom, Babylon, and Egypt*, to be remembered in the more grievous destruction of *Rome*, ch. xi. 8. xix. 3.

2. As God does every thing for the sake of his church, it is probable, that these seven epistles describe the effects, which the government of providence, expressed in the seven
seals

86 *Probable Reasons for the prophetic Sense.*

seals and *trumpets*, will have upon his professing people, to the end of time.

3. As Christ, at his ascension, not only gave his church *apostles, prophets, and evangelists*, but also ordinary *pastors and teachers*, Eph. iv. 11. it does not seem improbable, that, under the labours of such different ministers, seven churches might be found, at the close of the first century, whose description should so exactly represent the dispositions of the successive periods of the church, that they might be properly called *prophetic* of them. If *other* ages of the church, since that time, have produced *churches*; and some churches in each age have had *members*, of similar dispositions to the reigning characters of seven such periods, certainly the *first* might.

4. If we place the comma differently, those words, ch. v. 1. may be read, *The book was written within; and on the backside sealed with seven seals*; but as its brightness was such, that *no one in heaven or earth could even look upon it*, ver. 3, 4. it is highly probable, that it was *written* (as the two tables of stone, given at Sinai, on each side, Exod. xxxii. 15. that is, in this case) *within and without*, like the book handed to *Ezekiel*, ch. ii. 10. *Within* Ezekiel's roll was written *full of mourning, lamentation, and woe*; but *without* were probably written, and in their own places too, on the backside, the

the precious promises which are given us in that prophecy. So this prophecy, from the sixth chapter to the end of the book, was written *within* this book ; for the whole of it is disclosed by opening the seven seals. What then could the writing on the *backside* of it be, which was so bright and glorious, but an account of the state of the church, from A. D. 96, to the end of the world? If it had not been prophetic, it might have been looked upon : but if it was prophetic, it must certainly be explained to us ; yet it is not, if the literal state of these seven churches does not contain a prophetic history of the whole. It should therefore be proved, that this book was not written on the *backside* ; or admitted, that the writing there was probably different from that in the inside, and intended to be, some way or other, discovered to us.

But to come yet closer to our subject. The question is not, (1.) Whether these epistles concern Christians in general, in every age. This is asserted of the whole book of the *Revelation*, and therefore of these epistles, ch. i. 3. xxii. 6, 12, 16. as well as declared seven times in the epistles themselves, in these words, *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches.* Nor, (2.) Whether there are periods in ecclesiastical, as well as in all other history ; or certain grand marks which characterize particular times, or ages.

ages. Nor, (3.) Whether the state of one, and especially of many neighbouring churches, will not probably produce a similar, or a worse state in others. Nor, (4.) Whether every age has not its *present truths*, sins, and duties. Nor, (5.) Whether these seven churches cannot be, in their graces and sins, as well as in God's mercies and judgments to them, in some sense, *types* of other churches, which were to succeed them; 1 Cor. x. 6, 11. *Gr.* And if God had not designed them to be so, he would not have added to each, *Hear what the spirit saith to the churches*. But the question is, Whether the Holy Ghost has not divided the Christian church into seven periods; and described the state of each successively by these seven epistles. Perhaps some, or many of these seven periods would, to the curious inquirer, by their events, divide themselves into seven parts; but whether they would or not, when I consider, that the Lord has demanded attention to the number *seven*, by the days of the *week**, by the *seven* days of unleavened bread, and of the feast of *tabernacles*; by the feast of *weeks*; by the *sabbatical* year; by the feast of jubilee, after *seven times seven* years, and by

* Some have observed, that, after the account of the creation, "it is not said of the *seventh*, as of every preceding day, *The morning and the evening was such a day*, because the *seventh* day was designed to adumbrate the eternal sabbath;" which will begin soon after the close of the seventh millenary.

many other things which signalized the number *seven* in the Jewish ritual ; and especially by the *seven seals, trumpets, and vials* of this book, each of which describe *seven* successive periods, I am constrained, with almost every modern interpreter, to suppose that these *seven* epistles refer to *seven* periods of the Christian church ; especially, as the world will certainly continue, at least, seven thousand years (as Solomon was *seven years* in building the temple, 1 Kings vi. 38.) ; and as every other *seven* mentioned in this book, has indisputably some respect to *succession*, as well as expresses *multitude* and *variety*. Such are the *seven spirits which are before the throne* ; which are the *seven horns and eyes of the Lamb*, ch. v. 6. and minister to the successive necessities of every believer (who is entitled to every thing that Christ has, and is), as well as to those of all the churches. It was God himself therefore that made *seven* the number of perfection, in Christ, and in the Spirit ; and thus taught us that he will compleat the number of his churches, and the graces of his elect, in and by the number *seven* ; beyond which there is no provision of grace in Christ, or in the Spirit, for the church militant ; though no numbers whatever can count the power and wisdom, in Christ himself, or could be designed for that purpose.

And while these things naturally lead us to consider the Christian church as divisible into *seven* periods, I cannot but consider each *period* as successively described by these seven *epistles* (which therefore concern Christians in this order) ; because,

I. This assigns a reason for God's calling the whole book a *revelation* and a *prophecy*. True, the titles of books cannot always contain an account of every thing in them; yet, as this whole book is a *Revelation of Jesus Christ* (who is not *revealed*, merely by an historical relation of the state of these churches; nor revealed afresh by promises and threatenings to them, so much as he would be by the predictions of futurity), if the Holy Ghost, at the beginning and end of it, calls it a *prophecy*; unless it can be proved that some part of it cannot be prophetic, it is most honourable to its divine author, to consider every part of it as such.

It begins with informing us, that God gave *this revelation* to *Jesus Christ*, to *shew his servants things which must shortly be done*; which he *sent and signified by his angel, to his servant John*, ch. i. 1. and having, ver. 3. declared the blessedness of devoutly attending to *prophecy* in general, it is not probable, that he should in the next verse, and for some following

following chapters, immediately divert to a subject, which has no relation to prophecy, viz. the epistles*; especially as, in ch. xxii. 6. he says the same things again of the whole book, including the *seven-sealed book*, which Christ opened, from ch. vi. to the end of this prophecy: therefore, though John is ordered to *write the things which are*, as well as *the things which shall be hereafter*, ch. i. 19. the former, with their *literal*, must also have a *prophetic* meaning, because the whole is, at the close of it, called the *words*, and *the sayings of the prophecy of this book*, and *the words of the book of this prophecy*; see ver. 7, 9, 10, 18, 19. which last phrase declares, that the whole book is prophetic; out of which the *epistles* cannot be excepted, which eminently contain *the sayings* which Christians are *to keep*, though a few of them are found in other parts of the prophecy; see ver. 9, 10. To prove this yet farther, we may reason thus,

The testimony of Jesus, which the saints *have*,
is the spirit of prophecy, ch. xix. 10.

But the *true sayings of God* in this book,
are that testimony of Jesus which they
have, ver. 9, 10.

Therefore, the *sayings of God* in this book,
have the *spirit of prophecy* in them.

Or thus; God's people *keep the sayings of this book* in general, ch. xxii. 9. but the *sayings of*

* See Mr. Maddock's letter to the Rev. M. Browne, on
the downfall of antichrist, p. 4.

this book, are the *sayings of the prophecy of this book*, ver. 10, 19. therefore, in keeping the *sayings of this book*, God's people keep the *sayings of prophecy*; which therefore is of *no private interpretation*, but must be extended to every thing, which the words will fairly describe, 2 Pet. i. 20. And, to intimate the unity of design which runs through the whole of it, it is always called one *book*, one *revelation*, and one *prophecy*, in the singular number.

II. This assigns a reason for God's addressing his people of every age, through *seven* particular churches, and their ministers. It is plain, that the whole book is addressed to the seven churches, as well as these epistles; for, after the preface it begins thus, ch. i. 4. *John to the seven churches which are in Asia**; and our Lord adds, ver. 11. *what thou seest, and so whatever thou seest, write*; not in different books, but, *εις βιβλιον*, in one *book*, of the common size of other books of scripture (with which thou hast been either providentially, or miraculously furnished in Patmos); *and send it*,

* Mr. *Lenfant*, on these words, says, "Comme il est constant, qu'il y a du mystere attaché au nombre de sept dans l'écriture, de savans interpretes ont jugé fort raisonnablement, que par ces sept eglises, il faut entendre tout l'église en général, dont les eglises d'Asie sont données à S. Jean comme l'emblème; parce qu'elles avoient été le principal objet de ses soins, et que tout ce qui est contenu dans ces divines lettres, leur convenoit en particulier."

that

that is, the book, *to the seven churches which are in Asia*. While he was in banishment, he might have no opportunity of sending to these churches; or if he had, as for any thing that appears to the contrary, he received the whole revelation in one day, ver. 10. when he had finished the epistles, he proceeded to write the subsequent visions, in the same book, as he was ordered. And, not finding them directed afresh to any other persons, he certainly concluded, that they were designed for the seven churches. And when the churches received the book, or had each their copy of it, besides the address to each, they could not but consider the whole revelation as directed to them. And, seeing that it referred to one grand subject, equally interesting to all Christians; and that all others were expressly warned, through the admonitions and reproofs which were addressed to them, they might naturally consider themselves, as designed to be vehicles of divine instruction to the churches of every age.

By the year 96, the gospel *sound* was gone out to the ends of the world; and other churches were doubtless founded in *Asia Minor*, besides these *seven*, and those in *Galatia*, and at *Coloss*, which *St. Paul* had addressed: therefore when these churches recollected, that there must be some reason, why that which was designed for the use of all Christians, should be addressed only

only to *seven*, and to *these* seven churches; it was natural for them to conclude, that the Lord Jesus, who is always present in every part of his mystical body, and walks in no church whatever to the neglect of others, had chosen to address his people of every age by them, because of the similitude of their dispositions, characters, and circumstances, to those of the churches in general, of every period. And if any thing should occur, in any of the churches of Christ, different from all the things mentioned in these epistles, it would appear, that Christ had not warned his people of it from heaven; as it could not be comprized under these words, *Hear what the spirit saith to the churches*. But of every thing that can ever possibly concern the church, it is said, ch. xxii. 16. *I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify to you these things* (viz. the things which must quickly be done, even the sayings of the prophecy of this book), *ἐπὶ ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις*, that is, *in, upon, or by means of these churches*; as well as for the sake of, and concerning all others; for *ἐπὶ*, with a dative case, has all these senses; see *Stockius* and *Parkhurst*.

III. There are marks of a prophetic design *in and about* the epistles themselves. As it is more honourable to the wisdom and grace of the Lord Jesus, to suppose him addressing the ministers and churches of every age, than to restrict his words to seven individuals and churches;

churches; so thus to restrict them, would make his words, ch. ii. 1. and ch. iii. 1. true, only for a little time; but taking them prophetically, it is true in every age, that he has the *seven*, though not the *first seven stars*, and holds them in his right hand, that is, in office; always walking in the midst of the *seven golden candlesticks*, even after these churches were destroyed. Accordingly there are marks of a prophetic design, (1.) In the word *candlestick*, ch. i. 20. Every church of God is a *candlestick*, upon which he sets celestial light, Matt. v. 15. yet these need not have been called both *churches* and *candlesticks*, if he had not designed, by the former to speak them literal, and by the latter prophetic; which last appears from this, that the word *candlestick*, in God's house, implies seven lamps, or lesser societies, holding forth the word of life; and accordingly, more than one church is visibly addressed in every epistle. Besides, the word *candlestick*, being prophetic, ch. xi. 4. may certainly be so, ch. i. 20. and ii. 1, 5.

(2.) In Christ's addressing these epistles only to the *ministers* of these churches, whose office it is, to give men warning of the sins and dangers of their own time; at the same time, taking no notice of the *deacons* of the churches, as in St Paul's epistles.

(3.) In

(3.) In the names given to these ministers, viz. *stars* and *angels*, ch. i. 10. A *star* is prophetic, Dan. viii. 10. Rev. ix. 1. and therefore should be understood so here. And ministers are never called *angels*, except in prophetic language; see Matt. xi. 10. *Gr.* and especially in this *revelation*.

(4.) In the word *mystery*, ch. i. 20. *the mystery of the seven stars, and the seven candlesticks*. It was no more a *mystery*, that there should be churches at Ephesus, Smyrna, &c. than at Rome or Corinth: nor is there any great *mystery*, in the resemblance between *stars* and ministers, or between churches and *candlesticks*: but that there should be seven *periods* of the church, and no more; and these represented by seven, then-existent, churches, has something in it *not fully to be comprehended* (at least, in the reasons and causes of it), *even when it is revealed*; which seems to be the meaning of the word *mystery*, every where in the scripture.

(5.) When Christ had hinted at a prophetic sense, in the words *angels* and *candlesticks*, the spirit, as Christ's glorifier, in every epistle, takes up his words, and addresses them to every church and individual of a similar description, saying, *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches*. For
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our author's greater confirmation, respecting the blessedness of the saints in heaven, immediately upon their dismissal from the body, it was announced to him, both by a *voice* from heaven, and by the *spirit's* mediate, or immediate testimony, ch. xiv. 13. But the spirit's seal, at the close of these epistles, not only confirms Christ's words to these seven *angels* and *churches*, but visibly extends them to all others who resembled them, and have *ears to hear*. And when only one epistle was written, viz. that to *Ephesus*, it was said, *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches*; which implied, that there were then other churches and individuals, of similar dispositions to those of the Ephesian church, who were concerned in their admonitions; and the same may be said of the other churches; for this phrase, *He that hath an ear, &c.* cannot be restricted to persons or places, though it certainly refers to what had been said before. And, though it cannot be known from the epistles themselves, how long the reproofs and admonitions in each will demand the attention of Christians, that is, how long each period will continue; this cannot but appear from ecclesiastical history; and is, in part, notified by the subsequent visions of the *seals* and *trumpets*; especially so the length of the *Philadelphia* period.

I only add, under this particular, that, as these words *Hear what the spirit saith to the churches*, are inserted near the close of the *three* first epistles; but placed at the end of the *four* last, if it should appear, that the prophetic sense of these epistles was little observed in the three first periods, but began to be noticed in the fourth, and fully confirmed in the fifth and following periods; perhaps it may be thought, that the latter position of these words may have contributed to suggest an attention to this design of the spirit.

IV. The order in which these epistles are placed (which the spirit also follows, in his very solemn seven-fold admonitions), speaks their design prophetic. Our Lord spake of things orderly; when *he opened his mouth*, to declare and pronounce the eight *beatitudes*; which contain an account of the *rise and progress of religion in the soul*; see Matt. v. 1—12. There may indeed be great, but there can be no *blest mourning*, before *poverty of spirit*, which our Lord has named as the *first* step to heaven; as, firmly to endure the sharpest sufferings, for his sake, is the *last* effort of mortal duty: nor is Luke, vi. 20—26. any objection to this idea. So *Canticles* contains an orderly account of the Christian's experience, from the new birth to the end of his life. But whatever be thought of the above, there must be some
reason

reason, for the order in which these epistles, and the spirit's septenary of warnings, founded upon them, are placed; as there was of the *seals*, *trumpets*, and *vials*; which perhaps our Lord needed not to have mentioned, ch. i. 11. previous to his dictating them, if only seven literal epistles had been intended. Our maps place these cities in a kind of spheroidical form, in which *Pergamos* and *Laodicea* are the most distant from each other; but it does not appear, that they are addressed in order, either according to the size of these cities, or of the churches in them. If however, we find that these seven epistles (in their present divinely appointed, though in no other *position* whatever,) contain such an orderly prophetic history of the church of Christ, from the apostle's time to the end of the world, as ecclesiastical history manifestly verifies, who can doubt, but that divine wisdom *intended* to do what he *did*, when he informed the churches of what was to befall them, and in what order? especially when we find, that the names of these cities, by whatever different incidents they were at first occasioned, are descriptive, both of the first Christian church there, and of a period which it typified. This will appear, when we come to consider the epistles themselves. There was certainly no such characteristical significance in the names of the cities to which *St. Paul* wrote his epistles; much less any directions given, as to the order in which they

were to be sent : yet the Holy Ghost had before prepared us for this idea, by making allusions to the meaning of the names of places, in *Achor*, Josh. vii. 25. Hos. ii. 15. *Abraham* and *Achzib*, Mic. i. 10, 14. *Jerusalem*, Heb. vii. 2. and other places ; as he also uses hieroglyphical representations, in the subsequent visions of this prophecy.

V. There are phrases in these epistles, which admit of a fuller application in a prophetic, than to take them only in a literal sense. We shall find instances of this in the three first epistles : and indeed, every epistle receives additional beauty, as well as amplitude, from the idea of a prophetic sense ; as we hope to shew under each.

If therefore this whole *revelation* is called a *prophecy* ; if there are marks of a prophetic sense in and about the epistles ; if they are placed in such an *order*, as makes them contain an exact description of the state of the churches from A. D. 96 to the end of the world ; if taking them prophetically gives an amplitude and beauty to every epistle ; if, at the same time, the *seven horns and seven eyes* of the Lamb can neither describe his personal wisdom and power, nor the gifts bestowed upon any individual, any church, nor any seven churches only, but must be called *seven* with relation to the churches in general ; and finally,

finally, if the *seven spirits of God*, admonishing the churches, after Christ's ascension, must certainly have warned them of every thing that will be interesting to them to the end of the world, and has done it in the order of Christ's own words, in these epistles, I cannot doubt but that the epistles describe, both the *things that are, and the things that shall be hereafter*, ch. i. 19. while the *seals and trumpets* disclose only the latter, ch. iv. 1. At least, no evil spirit could have first suggested this idea; because it manifestly exalts Christ, and promotes holiness.

I conclude therefore, that if the *brethren* had not misunderstood our Lord's words, John xxi. 22, 23. if *our author* had lived from A. D. 96 to 3125, as he could not but have divided ecclesiastical history into different periods, and have seen clearly the marks which distinguish each; as there will certainly be seven eminent-periods, he must see the characters and bounds of each, as clearly as he saw the difference between a *fallen star*, and those which Christ *holds in his right hand*; or between those faithful ministers, who were respectively represented by the *lion*, the *calf*, the *man*, and the *eagle*; ch. iv. 6, 7.

True, these periods of the Christian church have been hitherto so imperfectly understood, that it is not strange, that they have been
differently

differently dated by different authors. But, while this is no objection to the doctrine itself, and I know of no difficulties in it, but what admit of an easy solution, I am the more inclined to understand these epistles prophetically,

1. Because this tends to ascertain the sense of the succeeding prophecy; for when we have investigated its meaning (as the state of the world will certainly affect that of the church), if we find it perfectly agreeable to this ecclesiastical schedule of contents prefixed to it, this will certify us, that we have not mistaken the prophecy of the *seals* and *trumpets*. And probably Christ gave this prophecy double, like the dream to *Pharaoh*, that the latter part of it might explain the former, as well as add the seal of confirmation to it.

2. It gives a most engaging view of the wisdom and grace of the great head of the church, to suppose him giving them warning of the particular dangers which will assault them in every period. And to suppose the epistle to *Sardis*, for instance, descriptive of the present period, brings the authority and grace of the Lord Jesus, as it were, nearer to ourselves; and adds such a solemnity and tenderness to the warnings, admonitions, and consolations, addressed to the saints of these times, as were visibly needful to stimulate duty, and encourage

encourage hope. This, however, makes it treason against the Lord's Christ, to discourage men from studying prophecies, before they are fulfilled; which defeats one important end of their publication. But our Lord cannot have given *prophecies*, which he would not have us read, or consider, till they become *histories*; therefore, he that will not now attend to *prophecies*, is likely to make a dismal part of future history. He that will not be warned, makes himself a warning to others.

3. Besides the general sufficiency of scripture, to furnish the *man of God unto all good works*, to suppose these epistles prophetic of the leading characters of every period of the church, is to make them answer, as it were, the same end, as if the Christian church had such a succession of prophets, as the Jewish church had; for these epistles warn professors of religion of the epidemic ecclesiastical diseases of every time; stimulate them, by the most powerful motives, to guard against their contagion; and direct our faith to such characters of Christ, and such suitable promises, under every period, as contain the most sovereign incentives to neglected and the most unpopular duties. The lying pretence of popish *infallibility*, is set up for purposes the reverse of these; but while *the lips* of that *strange woman*, mentioned Rev. xvii. *drop as the honeycomb*, be it ever remembered, that she

she is a deep ditch, and a narrow pit; Oh! shun its brink, Christians; for *he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein.*

But to come to the epistles themselves. *Christ* directs them; not to the *Pope*, who desires to lord it over all churches and periods; nor to *diocesan bishops*, who are creatures of the state, and, as such, have no other than a political existence; but to the *angel*, or minister, whom he had employed in such a city, that is, to every co-ordinate *angel* so employed; see Acts xx. 17, 28. for, being himself constantly present in his own house, he can admit of no gentile or Jewish *hierarchical* government there; therefore he has here represented his spiritual government, as it is to be administered upon earth, in every nation and age, by seven independent ministers and churches. And, that his ministers may not think themselves sole governors in his house, the spirit directs these epistles to the churches, as independent bodies; for every church of God, as instructed by their own minister, has all that power in itself, in religious matters, with which our Lord ever intended to intrust men; and a departure from this constitution, has brought all that disgrace upon the church, which we find in its three middle periods.

The *first* of every thing in scripture is generally esteemed the best, and takes rank and place

place accordingly; such was the apostolic, or *Ephesian* period, which came first; and had this peculiar to itself, that it had *tried them, who gave out that they were apostles, and were not; and had found them liars.* This trial however was probably not peculiar to the church at *Ephesus*, though it was to the apostolic age. Yet churches in every period are bound to *try the spirits* and pretensions of those, who say they are commissioned to preach the gospel. He that held *the seven stars in his right hand*, and walked *in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*, saw with pleasure, and celebrates their *works, their labour, their patience, their hatred to the impure deeds of the Nicolaitans* (who were initial papists, as will be shown under the third period, ch. ii. 15.); and, in general, that they *could not bear them that were evil.* For these reasons, this period was, to the Lord Jesus, more emphatically *επις, desire**, than *Ephesus* had ever been to the deluded votaries of *Diana*, Acts xix. 35. And he promises to *him that overcometh, to him I will give, what Adam lost; I will give him to eat of the tree of life, which grows out of the reach of danger, in the midst of the paradise of God in heaven, Rev. xxii. 2, 14.*

This period continued through the first century. Yet, when most of the apostles

* From *επις*, and *ἐπις*, *mitto.*

were dead, before the year 96, they had *left* their *first love*, ch. ii. 1—7. and accordingly ἀφεσις*, which is referred to in ἀφηναις, ver. 4. signifies the *remitting, omitting, or leaving* of any thing.

No period of the church ever had such *love* as the apostolic; yet, while many were still laying down their lives for Christ, by A. D. 96, the *mystery of iniquity*, working among them, had abated their general fervour; which was eminently grievous to the Lord Jesus, and occasioned his *removing their candlestick*, not indeed out of the world, yet *out of his place* among the other candlesticks, or churches. To explain which we may observe, that as *St. Paul* continued *three years* preaching the gospel, in and about *Ephesus*, so that *all they which dwelt in Asia* heard the word of God, Acts xix. 10. xx. 31. so it is probable, that, in the striking *imagery* of this sacred vision, our apostle saw the *Ephesian* or apostolic *candlestick* placed in the centre of the other candlesticks, and beaming upon each with peculiar splendor; which seems to have been supposed in the threatening of *removing it out of his place*. But if God removes it to another situation in this prophetic scene, as really as *mountains and islands* removed out of *their places*, ch. vi. 14. it must comport with its

* From ἀπο, and μιτο, mitto.

new position, and take rank and place with other candlesticks of its own order. So, for leaving their first love, the primitive churches lost much of the light and heat of the apostles; and gradually came down, from one step, or period, to another, even to modern degeneracy; which would not have been the case, if they had kept their first love; the decay of which, therefore, every age, since that time, has had infinite occasion to deplore. This assigns a reason for its being said only of the apostolic churches (though *all* are prone to degenerate), that *they* had *left their first love*; and why no other period but this is threatened with the *removal of their candlestick out of his place*; though churches in every period, like *Ephesus*, awfully lose the gospel, and with it the gracious presence of God.

But while we lament the loss of the apostolic light and heat, let us rejoice that this candlestick was not annihilated; for Christ is, in every age, *ὁ περιπατῶν*, he that *walks*, in the present tense, *in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*, ch. ii. 1. and, I apprehend, that there were at the time of this vision, are now, and always will be churches, in some measure of similar dispositions, both to the seven Asiatic churches, and to the seven periods which they adumbrated. Amongst all these Christ constantly *walks*, ver. 1. trimming the lamps of each, that they may not die; yet exerting a

special influence, to excite men to the peculiar duties of each current period. This demands our present attention to every epistle; yet especially fixes it upon that which concerns our own times.

Thus the gospel was removed from the city of Ephesus, and from Asia to Europe; as it has been from other places, for the same reason for which they lost it: and also the apostolic light and heat have decayed: all which was signified by the *removing* of the first *candlestick out of his place*; see ch. ii. 1—7. But if the other candlesticks successively occupy the central place, there was no such reason to speak of *their* removal from it; as none of them ever had such light and heat to communicate, as the first or *apostolic* candlestick had.

The second, or *Smyranean* period continued from A.D. 64 to 305, through the ten heathen Roman persecutions; which are generally supposed to be intended by their *having tribulation ten days*. And it is not probable, that the Holy Ghost should have predicted a *θλίψις*, or *persecution* of only *ten* literal *days*, or even *ten weeks*. And, though *Smyrna*, and its neighbouring churches, endured tribulation by the persecution of one emperor and another, more than *ten years*; yet it gives a far nobler, and more interesting sense to the words, to suppose that

that our Lord advertises them (by his only surviving, and now banished apostle), that the persecutions which a bloody *Nero* began, would be repeated *ten* times. And this tribulation for *ten days*, probably occasioned the heathen Roman persecutions to be called *ten*; though there were not, says *Mosheim*, so many *universal*, but many more *provincial* ones. Yet while *the devil casts some of them into prison*, and others are called to be *faithful even to death*, He, *the great First and Last, who was himself dead, and is alive again*, assures them, that he observes *their works, their tribulation, and their poverty*; and that, in their sharpest sufferings, they are to him like aromatic myrrh*, bleeding from some Arabian tree; which spreads a fragrance around their names, and even morally embalms their dead bodies too.

Amidst all their *poverty*, the saints of this period were eminently *rich*, in faith, and in good works; *rich towards God*, and in his esteem: therefore, while eternal pain and loss await their persecutors, and all those *blasphemers*, who said they were *Jews* (in the spiritual, as well as in the carnal sense of the word), and were *not*, but were *the synagogue of Satan*, Rom. ii. 28, 29. Christ commands these conquerors, not to yield to the impious impressions of fear; for they shall not be hurt

* *Σμύρνα*, *Æolicé*, *μύρρα*, *myrrh*; see *Parkhurst* and *Stockius*.

110 *The third, or Pergamean* [Ch. ii. 12—17.

of the second death; on the contrary, their Lord engages to give those who were *faithful to death a crown of life*, ch. ii. 8—11.

It is observable, that the church at *Smyrna* is not censured at all; which, taking the epistles literally, proves it to be purer than the church at *Ephesus*; as it probably was, than any other literal church here mentioned. Yet it does not follow from hence, that the Smyranean martyrs, all along from A. D. 64 to 305, had more grace than even the first part of the apostolic age (which was made glorious by the light and zeal of many apostles alive together); though the latter part of that age, which coincided with the first part of the Smyranean period, had dishonoured itself by an abatement of its holy fervour.

The *third* period, which began with the reign of *Constantine* the great, A. D. 306, and continued till 756, signalized itself by its preposterous unions of truth and error, sin and holiness, in the churches. Many professors of religion also, in these times of their temporal grandeur, and consequent carelessness, married heathen wives. But if one special marriage was intended to be signified by the word *Pergamos** it must be that of the church

* Περλαμ, i. e. *περ*, emphatic, or—soever; or *περι*, concerning, and *γαμ*, marriage.

and *state*. This union could not take place, till after the Roman empire was crumbled into ten kingdoms, A.D. 456; see 2 Thes. ii. 6—8. Yet to prepare for it, early in this period, *Arius* began to set the church against her first husband. Anon, we find her clothed in a *Pelagian* dress, that she might be the more agreeable to the men of this world. In the year 606, *Mahomet* arose, the antichrist of the East: and in the same year, the ostensible glory of the western church was gathered into one contemptible figure, blasphemously called a *universal bishop*. Yet the church could not secure her union with the state, till another 150 years, viz. A. D. 756; after a courtship of more than 300 years.

The *literal* church at *Pergamos* must be corrupt indeed, to have persons, any way, connected with them, who could teach men to *eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication*. Justice, however, even in this life, often takes away the goats from among the sheep. And, saith our Lord to his minister there, *Repent of thy shameful connection with such enemies of God; or else I will come to thee quickly; and will fight, not against thee, yet against them with the sword of my mouth*. Continuing such men among them, could not but produce confusion and every evil work in the church; and gives room to conjecture, that

that *Antipas*, Christ's faithful martyr, was not put to death by the heathen inhabitants of Pergamos; but, as our Lord expresses it *ωαυ*, among you, that is, in the church there; especially as this agrees with the sense of the same words in John xiv. 17, 25. Acts xxvi. 8. Col. iv. 16. and as our Lord's concern, in these epistles, was not with the cities themselves, but with his churches in them.

If our Lord had designed to speak of Satan's power over any of these heathen cities, we might have expected him to say of *Ephesus*, where all Asia and the world worshipped Diana, rather than of Pergamos, *Satan's throne is there*; but having said it of Pergamos, we naturally understand it of the church there, or rather of a period which so corrupt a church predicted; especially as that *dragon*, the devil's giving an ecclesiastical beast his church and state throne, power, and authority, in this period, ch. xiii. 2. was in order that himself might virtually be, and he was accordingly, taken into communion with the church, A. D. 756, and elected as its head, in the person of the Pope; nor will he be cast out, but dwell peaceably and unsuspected there, till under the seventh trumpet; see ch. xii. 9. an event of which it was far more interesting to his church to be informed, than merely to be told of his power over a particular heathen city;

city ; though every church should remark their Lord's gracious attention to every disadvantage of their situation.

As a consequence of the former, we understand the word *Antipas** as a name of multitude (as it sounds), signifying all the men whom the Arians, papists, and Mahometans put to death in this period. And as this phrase *those days*, here spoken of Antipas, in our translation, frequently in scripture expresses many, and sometimes many hundred years, so it may here. And Christ's having, under this period, a *sharp sword with two edges*, to cut eastward and westward, naturally leads us to consider those abominations which these times produced in the eastern and western churches ; which, according to the common usage of scripture, are here described under the name of that ancient subtle enemy of Israel, *Balaam*, and of those early corrupters of the Christian faith, the *Nicolaitans*.

In the East, the leading men of these times practically held the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak, the king of Moab, to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel ;

* *Ἀντίπας*, like all (see Homer's *ἅντις*, Iliad, b. i. l. 264.), against all, or instead of all ; see Bp. Hurd on Prophecy, vol. ii. p. 10.

encouraging them, if they would not directly commit idolatry, yet *to eat things sacrificed to idols*; which soon brought them *to commit fornication*.

How the religion of Jesus was adulterated and debased by paganism, in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, may be seen in our ecclesiastical histories. Afterwards, in the East, it received a permanent taint from the deluded Mahometans, who allow polygamy; and when their *bagges*, or pilgrims, offer sheep in sacrifice, at *Mina* near *Mecca*, they are, no doubt, glad to seduce Christians, whenever any such are near them, to feed with them upon those sacrifices; of which we doubt not to assert, that *what these gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils*, and not, as they pretend, *to God*, 1 Cor. x. 20. and though they detest *image worship*, and their idolatry is contrived by the devil to be circumstantially different, both from that of the pagans and the papists; yet their *false prophet* is, in a sense, their God; and their *Beat Allah*, or *house of God*, at *Mecca*, “is in effect the object of their devotion, the idol which they adore;” witness their superstitious veneration paid to the pieces of its annual covering, to the rain that falls upon it, to the very dust of that house, to the besoms that sweep it, and to the models, or shrines which are made of it; as well as to
Mahomet's

Mahomet's tomb at Medina; all which fix the charge of *idolatry* upon them*; and this is commonly attended with corporal *uncleanness*. These were the *stings* the Saracen *locusts* carried in their *tails*, to leave in the breasts of the eastern Christians, ch. ix. 10. many of whom fell into this “*fatal error*, that it was lawful “to dissemble the Christian faith, and to conform to established superstition, to prevent “persecution.” And when they afterwards found those in the West, who *held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans*, doing the same things, it could not but tend to imbolden them the more, in *eating things sacrificed to idols*, and *committing fornication*; which are the two abominations so visibly promoted, though in different ways, by the eastern and western antichrist.

That eastern deceiver *Balaam*, who *lorded it over the people*†, by their supposing that God's blessing and curse were at his disposal, was the distant forerunner of *Mahomet*, who dishonoured this period; and who, I apprehend, will have a future resurrection in the *second beast*, when the *Mahometan chief* becomes a

* See Pitts's *Account of the Mahometans*, ch. vii, viii. and also Dr. King's *History of the* (very superstitious) *Greek Church in Russia*.

† כלעם q. כעל *Baal, Bel, Belus, Lord, and עם people*; or from בלע to *devour*, and ב in the *presence of*, q. *blow, or sling 'em*.

papal Christian. And *Nicolas*, whose name also signifies a *conqueror of the people**, here represents the *Pope* (who was not, however, furnished with sufficient power to enslave mankind, till the close of this period) ; for of whose *deeds* is it so likely that the Lord should, in these epistles, twice say *I hate* them, as of *his*, against whom it is the grand design of this prophecy to warn his people ? see ver. 6, 15. and ch. xi. to xix.

Between these two impostors there is this difference : *Balaam* and *Mahomet* perswaded the professors of religion to leave the worship of God, and join their idolatrous impurities : but (whatever share *Nicolas*, the deacon, had, or had not, in the guilt of some, who might perhaps be called after his name) the *Nicolaitans*, and the *Pope*, came into the church, to establish their idolatry and lewdness, even before God. And wickedness will be at its height upon earth, when the Mahometan chief, as the *second beast*, comes into the church ; to join his forces against God, with those of the *first beast*, a little before he is forever cast out.

Yet even the Pergamean period had some who *held fast* Christ's name, as *king of kings*, &c.

* Νικολας, from νικew, to *conquer*, and λαος, *the people*, or *laity* : hence perhaps to *nick*, and *Old Nick*.

and

and did not deny his faith, even when the church itself was become the *throne of Satan*, and the palace of his peace. Such were the pious adherents of *Antipas*, Christ's *faithful martyr*, whom he supported with *bidden manna* (unknown to sensual churchmen of these times, who were hunting after worldly honours and visible emoluments); and assigned them future seats with him on his throne, by that *white stone* of absolution and honour, which had *a new name written on it*, known only to him that *receiveth it*; especially while the *smoke of the bottomless pit* enveloped professors of that age; who, alas! saw not that Christ stood, through the whole of this period, with a *sharp two-edged sword*, ready to cut asunder those priests of Baal, who made this impious match between the church and state; which yet, in righteous vengeance, he still suffers to plague the world; see ver. 12—17.

But if it seems strange to any, considering the great corruptions of this and the next period, that our Lord should only say of both these churches, *I have ὀλίγα, little, or a few things* against thee, ver. 14, 20. recollect, that the Romish church, as such, is no part of the church of Christ, being the kingdom of the beast: and, though the order, *Come out of her, my people*, ch. xviii. 4. supposes, that some of God's elect may be found amongst them, even after the vials are poured out; yet *the court*
which

which is without the Christian temple, in the East and West, is given both to the Mahometans and papists, under the style and title of *gentiles*, ch. xi. 2. our Lord does not therefore charge his church with setting up antichrist, but only with *suffering* his intrusions, so far as it was in her power to prevent it, ver. 20. We must carry this thought with us into the next period.

The word *Thyatira* signifies *obstinate sacrificing**; which was the leading character of the middle period, from A. D. 756 to 1517, when *Luther* began the reformation from popery.

Taking this epistle *literally*, either *Helena*, the harlot of *Simon Magus*; some lewd deaconesses among them, 1 Tim. v. 9, 15. or other infamous mistress of idolatrous and seducing arts, like Jezebel (1 Kings xvi. 31. xxi. 25.), taught this deluded church, that the apostolic decree, Acts xv. 29. commanding them to *abstain from meats offered to idols, from fornication, from things strangled, and from blood*, was only a ceremonial institution, appointed till the times of compleater reformation and liberty, which she said were come, as the Jewish polity was now destroyed. And

* From θυειν, to sacrifice, and ἀλεψ, unconquerable, q. α and τειρω, tero.

probably,

probably, she undertook to prove her point, from Acts xvi. 4. where these edicts are called *δoγματα*, *positive degrees*. But these her learned *depths*, as they speak, the Holy Ghost calls by their proper name, viz. *depths of Satan*. True, there were additional reasons, peculiar to the times of the first planting of the gospel, for abstaining from *meats offered to idols*, and from *fornication*; on which account, they were, in that decree, joined with *things strangled*, and *blood*: yet the two former were always, in their own nature, violations of the moral law, and soul-ruining; therefore, the Holy Ghost would not conclude the sacred canon, without expressly distinguishing them from the two latter, which were only ceremonial, and therefore to *vanish away*. Accordingly, having here asserted the iniquity of *eating things offered to idols*, and of *fornication*, he adds, *I will lay upon you none other Law & burden*; thus carefully distinguishing between the moral and ceremonial part of that edict, in Acts xv. abolishing the latter, and establishing the former of these. He adds *nevertheless*, as the gospel has now, no other ceremonial appendage left about it, to be hereafter repealed, *hold fast* the above duties, and whatever else *thou hast received from me, till I come*.

And this command is certainly as interesting to us, as to the church at *Thyatira*. And as this epistle exactly describes the severest assault

assault that ever was, or can be made upon Christianity; an assault that continues for many hundred years, and engages ten thousand times more than all the craft and cunning of any single *Jezebel* upon earth, yea all the rage and malice of hell; who can doubt but that our Lord intended to point it out to us? especially as this is an ecclesiastical cheat, found in his own house. Such is that drunken *whore*, who rides the *scarlet coloured beast*, with seven heads and ten horns, ch. xvii. 3. who calls herself a prophetess, and predicts the power of her indulgences in heaven, the miracles she intends to work, the self-invented fires of purgatory, the glory of her saints in heaven, and the misery of her enemies in eternity. By these and ten thousand methods of fraud and force, she has, ever since A. D. 756, like the Old-Testament *Jezebel*, strenuously promoted *idolatry* and *lewdness*, which are the main pillars of popery; of which (whatever men may say) God has asserted, *that she never did, nor will repent**. On the contrary, she goes on to offer the sacrifice of the *mass*, which is a constant crucifying of Christ in effigy: and having, in every age, *sacrificed* the best men of their times; and still continuing to *sacrifice* the reason, sense, honour, and conscience of men, there can be no

* See my sermon on Rev. ix. 20, 21. entitled, *The Incurable Abomination*. 1781. Buckland.

reasonable doubt, of her future endeavour to sacrifice every thing that is dear to God and his servants. But our Lord has seen these abominations, with *eyes as a flame of fire*; and will trample upon her, with *feet that resemble fine brass*; and *cast her*, and her unrepenting offspring and admirers, *into such a bed*, as will *kill them with a death*, probably resembling that of Sodom and Gomorrah, ch. xix. 3.

Yet, even in these wretched times, Christ finds true evangelical *love, service, faith, patience and works*, in his witnesses, ch. xi. 3. *and the last of their works more than the first*; for they greatly increased through *Wickliff, the Waldenses, John Huss, and Jerome of Prague*, even to *Luther's time*. This assigns a reason, why the *works* of this church only are named twice; for their works in the beginning of the sixteenth century, were gloriously different, from what they had been, for some centuries after A. D. 756. These our Lord celebrates with delight; and promises to reward with that *morning star* of heavenly light, which opened so gloriously in this, and especially in the next period; and with such a *power over the nations*, not only as the *beast*, but as even the literal *church* of Thyatira never had; that, in the present and following period, and yet more visibly at the day of judgment, they may rule those, *with a rod of*
R *iron,*

iron, who would here yield to no gentle persuasives of human or divine love, ch. xi. 5, 6. And, though such men may be permitted to torment the world for the present, *as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken in pieces*, in succeeding ages ; see ver. 18—29.

In the vision of the *seals*, *trumpets*, and *vials*, we find the three last of each, more extensive than the four first ; and so we shall find the three last *epistles*, which are yet to be considered.

A *shield* is the hieroglyphic of the next, viz. the *fifth* period, which is the time of *reformation*, from A. D. 1517 to 2016 ; so the word *Sardis* signifies, in Syriac, says *Schrevelius* : and in this, and the following period, the gospel will be preached in *Syria*, and every other nation under heaven. And if you suppose a *shield*, the proper instrument of a defensive war, studded with red fiery *sardiuses*, with intermingled *sardonixes*, of many colours, one upon another, embossed therein, this will give a lively view of that spiritual defence, which believers have, especially in these times, by means of their steady faith of divine truth, and their unshaken confidence in the power and grace of their every-where present *Immanuel*. And when he comes to pour out the *vials* of his wrath, perhaps from A. D. 1936 to 1942,
they

they will probably think of the *Hebrew* sense of the word *Sardis*, viz. the *Lord's threshing**.

But as a part of this 499 years eminently concerns us, can we read without horror, what our Lord says of this period; while we *see*, and perhaps *feel* it too, awfully verified in and around us! viz. *Thou hast a name that thou livest*, (a literal description of the times of reformation!) *and art dead; the things which remain are ready to die; and I have not found thy works perfect, or filled up before God. Remember therefore*, adds he, with wonted grace, *how thou hast received, and heard from thy first reformers; who even now continue to bespeak your attention, by the blood they shed for you, as well as by their writings; and bold fast gospel doctrines, and that pure religion which they snatched for you, from the devouring jaws of the beast; and repent of thy indifference to the gospel (which, concealing itself under that cant word charity, unsuspected throws dirt in the Saviour's face, and treats him as an impostor), as well as of all thy other abominations. These things have insensibly stolen upon thee, in a benighted and sleepy hour; if therefore thou shalt not wake up thy powers, and watch, I will come upon thee suddenly, unexpectedly, and with great surprize and dread, as a thief,*

* שר a lord, or director, and דש to thresh, or dash.

in that dark night, which will gradually advance upon thee ; the darkness of which will, however, be attended with such a stupefying power, that amidst every warning given, *thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.*

Our Lord cannot come *as a thief*, to take that which is not his own ; for *he is Lord of all*, Acts x. 36. yet, *as a thief*, he will enter unobserved, and without noise, while men are asleep ; and permit the *second beast* (after A. D. 1866, and probably about 1886) to pack up, and carry away, not the lumber of your houses (thieves do not come for lumber ; their eyes are upon something better ; and Christ never speaks of himself as *coming as a thief*, when he comes only to take away temporal good things : therefore), you may still enjoy your temporalities quietly, if you will suffer the beast to set his *mark, name, image, or number* upon them ; but he comes to take away your valuables, your plate, jewels, &c. that is, your bibles, ordinances, sabbaths, sacraments, spiritual books, ministers, &c. &c. And if our Lord takes them away, nothing but his own power and grace can bring them again : but when God's servants see these things accomplished, they will probably have no more doubt about the prophetic sense of this, or the other epistles ; especially as they will then see its perfect agreement, so far, with the vision of the *seals and trumpets.*

And,

And, alas! dreadful as the above threatening is, there is no reason to believe, that the men of these times, will so generally *watch*, as to prevent this mischief; because the Jews would not take methods to prevent that destruction, with which *Moses, Isaiah*, and others of their prophets threatened them: and *are we better than they: no, in no wise*; because the modern divinity has generally absolved the magistrate, as such, from any care about the duties of the first table of the moral law; which (though *blindness* does not see it) even now *visibly* deluges the world, yea, and the church itself, with impiety and infidelity; because that church is still mixed among us, of which God has said, *I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not*, ch. ii. 21. and above all, because, as God has asserted that *popery*, and therefore papists in general, *never did, nor will alter for the better**; so, by a judicial stroke, *he has put it into the hearts of the ten horns, or kingdoms of the beast, to fulfil his vindictive will; even to agree, and give their kingdom to the beast; until the words which he has spoken on this subject shall be fulfilled*, ch. xvii. 17. see John xii. 39, 40.

* See the *Incurable Abomination*, quoted before. See also a *Summary Account of the Society in Scotland for propagating Christian Knowledge*. Edinburgh printed, 1783; which informs us of the growth of popery, in the *Highlands* there, and of the methods used to disseminate it in Edinburgh; which may well alarm the friends of religion and their country.

Therefore,

Therefore, after our Lord has *come as a thief*, to his church, he farther warns the men of this period, of his future coming, as such, to the wicked, at death and judgment; saying, under the sixth *vial* (which may perhaps be poured out upon the Turks, in the land of Israel, A. D. 1941), *Behold I come as a thief; happy is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments; that he may not walk naked, and they see his shame*, ch. xvi. 15. as “the guards of
“the temple were put to public shame, who
“were found sleeping upon their watch there,” says *Lenfant*.

Yet, amidst the impenitence of these times, the Lord Jesus cannot have given this warning wholly in vain. A few will *foresee the evil, and hide themselves*; and for their sakes I have attempted to prove the *prophetic* sense of these epistles, in hope that some of my cotemporaries will read this epistle to *Sardis*, as a letter from heaven, directed by the special appointment of God, to themselves particularly. While many *walk naked to their shame*, such persons will *watch, and keep their garments*. Of these Christ has said, *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, east and west, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in the white of purity on earth; for they are meet for this honour: and, when their victories are compleated, they shall be clothed in the white raiment of triumph in heaven.* And while,
by

by my providence here, and by my righteous sentence at death, I blot out ten thousand names of those who had vainly pretended a relation to me, *I will not blot out one of their names; but will confess the name of every such person, before my Father, and before his angels.* And though this hope is, in part, unseen at present, that character of himself by which our Lord seals it, has been very visible in this period, viz. *He that bath the seven spirits of God*, and dispenses them, at this day, in various natural and political gifts, as well as in spiritual grace; *and the seven stars*, or ministers: for, together with *Ephesian, Smyranean, Philadelphian, and Laodicean stars*, we have seen in the church of God, and yet must, with vast astonishment, even in the present illumined period, *Pergamean and Thyatirian* ministers; who under a profession of love to God, are so far deluded by the spirit of the world, as to consent, that kings should be dictators in the house of God; and connive at the *Balaamites, Nicolaitans*, and *Jezebels* of these times.

The *sixth*, or Philadelphian period will probably continue a thousand years, viz. from A. D. 2016 to 3016. And in these happy times, Christ will be known in the glory of his essential *holiness* and *truth* as God; and of his irresistible power as king mediator: for, having *the key of David*, he now *opens*, and *no man shuts*; *shuts*, and *no man opens*, as Eliakim,
his

his type had done, Is. xxii. 22. and his influence also produces that *Philadelphia*, or brotherly love which adorned the primitive times; and to which his grace alone can form the heart.

When God's children thus tenderly love one another, he will *set before them an open door*, that all the nations, which had not been completely evangelized, in the *Sardian* period, may now come in to share their joy and blessedness. This is what Christ's ministers, in preceding periods, had earnestly, but in vain, longed for; while corrupt establishments strove to confine their usefulness to one *registered* spot: but now our Lord will give a *door* of opportunity, and of *utterance*, for the preaching of the gospel; and a *door of faith*, for men to receive it; which will produce all the millennium, that good men can reasonably desire in this world. It is added, *for thou hast a little strength*: and, if it requires less strength now to hold fast God's truths, than it did in persecuting times; certainly in the peaceful millennium, at which time, ch. xx. 5. assures us, that the *Balaamites*, and *Nicolaitans*, the *Jezebels*, *Pharaohs*, and *Rabshakehs* of former ages, will be generally torpid, or hand-cuffed, a *little strength* will be sufficient to *keep* God's word, and not *deny* his name, as some former periods had shamefully done; see Is. lxiii. 8. and it is of this expressly that the Holy Ghost
here

here speaks, viz. of their strength *publicly* to hold fast God's *name*, truths, and glory. And when, at the same time, the glory of the Lord is seen all over the wide-extended Philadelphian period, agreeable to the magnificent promises in the last chapters of Isaiah, in Jer. xxxi. 34. and in other places which speak of these times; God's people will see, that our *Lord's days*, which had talked aloud of this period, could not fully represent its worship and pleasures.

Yet, in some part of these happy times, *Satan* will have a *synagogue*; especially among some *Jews*, who, seeing how their believing brethren (after they are restored to their own land) are beloved and honoured of God and men, will set up, upon the foundation of their native unbelief; saying, *that they are Jews*, in the spiritual sense of the word, though *they are not, but do lie*. The church, however, now delivered from the beast, will, in a sense, have no temptation to use *his* weapons against these deluded men; as their own magistrates now resolutely protect the letter of the ten commandments, Zech. xiii. 2, 3. 1 Tim. i. 9, 10. and as God's glory, visible upon his people, will *make* their enemies *to come and worship before their feet, and to know that he has loved them*; which will also put an everlasting end to the enmity between Jews and gentiles; see Rom. xi. 25, 26.

The faints, however, in this millennial sabbatism, or seventh millenary, are advertised, that an *hour of temptation* will come upon all the world, now externally christianized, to try them that dwell upon the earth. But this hour shall not come in the time of the Philadelphian period; because they have kept, says our Lord, *the word of my patience*, or that gospel which demands our patience under trials and afflictions, by assuring us of the divine patience with the world, till the scheme of his government is compleated; and representing it as a matter of patience to himself, in these times, that his enjoyment of his elect, must be delayed, till another short period is passed away; see Rom. xv. 5. Rev. i. 9. Behold, adds he, *I come ταχυ quickly*: and prophecies will be so conspicuously fulfilled by this time; and such striking things will speedily occur in the next period, that Christ's coming may, in a sense, be dated from this hour; see a note on the word ταχυ, ch. xi. 14. *Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man may take thy crown*; which some will attempt, even in the millennium. Observe, God's people will never be free from enemies on this side heaven. But though this longest, and happiest period of the Christian church must come to its close (after it has given them some idea of the celestial glory; see Is. li. 16. lxv. 17—19. lxvi. 22. and 2 Pet. iii. 8, 13.), our Lord promises, *Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar*

pillar in the temple of my God ; and he shall go no more out. And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God ; see ch. xxi. 2. and I will write upon him my own new name mediator, ver. 7—13.

That the *seventh*, which is the last period of the church, viz. from A. D. 3016 to 3125, should, at least for a considerable part of it, be the worst of all, will, - I apprehend, not surprise those who recollect, (1.) The violent tendency there is in human nature to apostatize from God. We act in religion, as we are acted upon ; and *run* to heaven, only as we are *drawn* : therefore, as soon as the grace of the millennium is withheld, professors of religion will fall morally asleep, and vainly dream of the duty and blessedness of former times. Yet this shadow of ancient greatness, may serve to keep up their proud distinction from the world ; and make them so far concur with the divine design, as not to tolerate the openly wicked among them ; nor suffer another popish farce to be acted over in Christendom. (2.) Satan being loosed out of prison, will renew all his wiles upon them, except popery, ch. xx. 7. (3.) The vilest of men now again croud and pollute the stage of life, who durst not shew their heads in the millennium, ver. 4, 5. which will have the same effect as

at present, and make *the love of many cold* towards God, Mat. xxiv. 12. (4.) Christ has assured us, that, notwithstanding every warning given, the ungodly world, whether in or out of the church, will be found in that awful state of security at his coming, which disgraced the old world and Sodom, as well as Jerusalem, just before its destruction, both by the Babylonians and the Romans; see Jer. vii. 4. Mat. xxiv. 37—51. Luke xvii. 26—30. xviii. 8.

Satan's being loosed out of his prison, at the beginning of this period; and his meeting again upon earth his dear *Pharaohs, Bonners, and Lauds*, though they are hand-cuffed, ch. xx. 5, 7. will probably produce that *hour of temptation*, of which our Lord had advertised the former period, that it should come upon *all the world* in this, *to try them that dwell upon the earth*, ch. iii. 10. And can the church of God see this (if indeed they *see* it!) and yet continue lukewarm and conceited? Two events, however, await them, which will probably remind them of Christ's *counsel*, and bring them to *buy his gold tried in the fire*; his *white raiment*, that they may be clothed; and to *anoint their eyes with his eye-salve*, that they may see, viz. the violent attack which will be made upon them, by enemies numerous as the *sand of the sea*, assembled from the *four quarters of the earth*, to force them to give up the name of Christians; and especially

especially so, the *fire* which will come *from God out of heaven*, to devour these their invaders. To which perhaps I might have added, the *devil's* being *cast into the lake of fire and brimstone*, to be *tormented, with the beast and the false prophet, day and night, for ever and ever*; which, if not done *visibly*, will probably be, some way, notified to God's people; whom it concerns to observe, how human nature will behave, when it is delivered from this tempter; see ch. xx. 8—10.

Whatever other providences, public or private, are necessary to engage the elect to attend to those counsels, reproofs, admonitions, and promises, which our Lord will continue to give to the end of the word; no doubt *the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler αρχη of the creation of God*, will both direct and bless for this purpose. Yet the above will be such a loud *knock at the door*, as Christ, who *had long stood there*, εστηκα, had never given before; and it will awake many: and some will doubtless be coming in, even to the last hour, to *sup with Christ*, before the stage of earth is taken down, ch. iii. 20. And if *wise virgins* can *slumber* again, after such alarming things, Mat. xxv. 5. yet as they know about the *year* when their Lord will come (see the notes on ch. xx. 11—15.), the very beginning of such a year, will probably utter this effectual cry in their consciences, *Behold the bridegroom*

bridegroom cometh! go ye forth to meet him. At the same time, the wicked will be left in their obstinate impenitence and unbelief, like *Lot's* sons in law, Gen. xix. 14. and, in this dreadful state, awake, alas! too late, by the *flaming fire* of that day of the Lord; see Mat. xxiv. 38, 39. Luke xviii. 8. 1 Thes. v. 3. 2 Thes. i. 7—9. And in that day it will appear, that this period was properly called *Laodicea**, the *vengeance* due to, or the *avenging of the people* in general; see ch. iii. 14—22.

Thus we have seen, in miniature, a prophetic history of the church, from the times of the apostles to the end of the world; which proves itself true, as well by its perfect correspondence with that prophetic history of the church and the world, which is given us by the vision of the *seals* and *trumpets*, as by its exact agreement with ecclesiastical history; which, even now, holds up a mirror to shew us the accomplishment of more than four parts and a half of it, viz. by the apostolic age, the heathen persecutions, the struggle for the papacy, the reign of it, and the begun reformation; which when compleated, will certainly be succeeded by the millennium, and the appointed close of all. As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the Lord is tried, or refined, Ps. xviii. 30. and a devout attention

* From λαοῖ, *populus, turba*, and δίκη, *jus, pœna, vindicta*.

to it is necessary to prove that we are *born of God*. But if some had not first neglected *prophecies*, Satan could not have prevailed upon them to *despise* them. And if I had apprehended, that little can be known about this *revelation*, till it is all accomplished, this would have deprived me of much pleasure and profit. May God unveil this book daily to every humble inquirer !

To *Brocarde*, whose *Revelation revealed* was printed in English, A. D. 1582; to *Vitringa*, *Brightman*, and *Dr. H. More*, it would have been easy to have added many other names, who have asserted the prophetic sense of these epistles: but a divine faith can rest only on God's words. My thanks are, however, due to the Rev. Mr. *Maddock* of Creaton, whose *Letter to the Rev. M. Browne, on the Downfal of Antichrist*, occasioned this inquiry into the internal evidences of a prophetic sense, which the epistles themselves seem to afford us; the truth of which, now supposed, permit me to intreat my readers,

1. To view the characters of every period, as they appear in the present. This will teach us whom to pity, and whom to warn; with whom to join ourselves, and whom to shun. Our Lord tells us, in the present *Sardian* period, ch. iii. 1. that he *has* now, that is, employs *τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἀστέρας*, *the seven stars*, which
have

136 *Every Period may be seen in the present.*

have successively illumined, or will, the different periods of the Christian church; therefore, in some ministers and churches, you now see more of the apostolic light and heat than in others; though even these will (alas! too soon) *leave their first love*. At the same time, some are labouring under *Smyranean* persecutions; some making literally and ecclesiastically, *Pergamean* marriages, as *Balaamites* and *Nicolaitans* would have them; some offering *Thyatirian* sacrifices, and shamefully conniving at the practices of a lewd and idolatrous *Jezebel* (alas! these men will not consider, that He, *whose voice shook the earth* at Sinai, and who afterwards *shook the heavens* by his gospel; by that last act did *virtually*, and will therefore, in due time, *really shake the sea*, out of which the first beast arose, and *the dry land*, which gave birth to the second; see Hag. ii. 6, 7. Heb. xii. 26, 27.); some are amusing themselves with a *Sardian* name to live; some rejoicing in *Philadelphian* enlargement; and others dishonouring themselves by *Laodicean* lukewarmness. Thus things will continue in the present period. And while, in every age, Christ *walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*, ch. ii. 1. in every age, some will oppose his way. And, notwithstanding the present national aversion of the Jews to idolatry, some, even in the *Philadelphian* period, who *say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie*, will indulge to such *Nicolaitan*, that is, *Perga-*

Pergamean and Thyatirian practices, as will awfully prove, that they are *the synagogue of Satan*; even when that enemy is shut up in the *bottomless pit*; see ch. ii. 6, 15. iii. 9. There were *many antichrists* in our apostle's time, and no age will be wholly free from them, 1 John ii. 18.

2. Bless God for the great advantages of the present period; which is, in some respects, the most indulged (though not the holiest), since the apostle's time. If we are free from *Smyranean* oppressions; and if our hands are clean from *Pergamean* strife for power, and from *Thyatirian* sacrifices, shall it not awake our gratitude to think, that some of our brethren, are, at this hour, distressed or polluted with one or other of these grievous evils?

3. Carefully perform the duties of your own stations in the present period. This is true charity to unborn ages, as well as present rational self-love. But how distant from such a temper were *Jeroboam the son of Nebat*, and the avaricious *Balaam*; who are both alive to this hour, in the mischiefs which the former did to the ten tribes of Israel, by the *calves of Dan and Bethel*; and the latter to the numerous nations, who are dishonoured by *Mahomet's* name; as well as, through them, to the benighted Christians in the East! Do

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you

you tremble at the thought of such an execrable kind of longevity, marked with the eternal ruin of successive myriads! Oh! stir up yourselves, ye ministers of God, to warn his elect, to hide themselves under the covert of his wings, from modern iniquities, and the awful judgments which they will bring upon the present period; see ch. iii. 3. Let magistrates also awake, and drive affrighted vice into its infernal cells. Yea, come, ye parents and masters too, to the *help of the Lord against the mighty*; so will God, even our own God, *bless us* temporally and eternally. To this end, especially,

4. Venerate, and delight yourselves in, the holy scriptures in general; which alone can give you proper ideas of God and yourselves, of time and eternity; and console your spirits, under the severest trials of labouring mortality. But the writings of our last-surviving apostle, may well, on many accounts, be eminently endeared to you; especially the *Revelation*, and his *Epistles*, which were probably written after it; in which he solemnly warns us, against every thing that would prepare the way of the great *antichrist*, whom he had before described. As thus warned, (1.) Guard against the deistical, Sabellian, and *in-dwelling scheme* antichrist; for *he is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son*. (2.) Against the Jewish antichrist; for *who is a liar, but he that*

that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? 1 John ii. 18, 22. (3.) Against the Arian and Socinian antichrist, ch. iv. 3. Every spirit that confesseth not that our Lord and God Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof you have heard, that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. For many deceivers are entered into the world; who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver, and an antichrist. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, is not of God. But he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, which is a doctrine of purity, humility, light, and love, he hath both the Father and the Son, 2 John 7, 9. If we attend to these things, the stamina of popery will die away in our hearts.*

To conclude. Comparing the vision of the *seals and trumpets*, with this account of the *periods* of the church, we observe,

1. In the apostolic age, Christ rode forth on the white horse of the gospel, *conquering and to conquer*; and this he did, before John saw it in vision, A. D. 96, by the opening of the first *seal*, ch. vi. 1, 2. though he rode out like a conqueror, more eminently after that time.

* See Dr. Horsley's Letters in Reply to Dr. Priestley, 1784.

2. In the *Smyranean* period, while the church was suffering persecution, from A. D. 64 to 305, their enemies the Jews, and especially the Romans, felt those four sore judgments of God, the *sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts*, which open under the second, third, and fourth *seals*, ch. vi. 3—8.

3. While the church was striving for secular power, under the *Pergamean* period, from A. D. 306 to 756, first their persecutors die in horror, under the *sixth seal*, ch. vi. 15—17. then the Roman empire is shaken to pieces, under the *four first trumpets*, ch. viii. 7—12. and Saracen and papal *locusts* torment the East and West, under the *fifth*, ch. ix. 1—11.

4. The *Thyatirian* period, from A. D. 756 to 1517, sees the Saracens and Turks ravaging the East; and both finds and leaves the two *witnesses* prophesying, against popery and Mahometanism, in the East and West; see ch. ix. x. xi.

5. An unsupported *name to live*, dishonours the greatest part of the *Sardian* period, from A. D. 1517 to 2016. We are called, yet hate really to be *reformed*. While, however, Pergamean and Thyatirian ministers are sinfully, though undesignedly, aiding the *prince*, and the powers of *this world*, to bring in popery again, the beast kills the *witnesses*, A. D. 1862; and

and the *second beast*, as the scourge of God, for our double dealing with him, spreads yet direr ravages. But the *vials* of God's wrath clear the air, by A. D. 1942; and call upon the daughters of Sion to *put on their beautiful garments*, to meet the Lord in the next period; see ch. xi. to xix.

6. The *Philadelphian* is the sabbatical period, from A. D. 2016 to 3016; therefore nothing is said in it, immediately, about the affairs of this world, except the general character of its people, and the number and spiritual glory of its *thrones*; for Satan is bound through the whole of this period; yet vain pretenders to religion debase, at least, a part of it; see ch. iii. 9. xx. 1—6.

7. In the *Laodicean* period, from A. D. 3016 to 3125, Satan, being released, gathers an army, from the *four quarters of the earth*, against the church of God. But he is cast into the *lake of fire*, before the day of judgment; and while, after that, sinners riot in security, even to the last hour; the saints awake at the approach of glory, and say exulting, as with one voice, *Come Lord Jesus; come quickly*. Amen and Amen.

F I N I S.

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